PENGUIN CLASSICS

OVID

Metamorphoses

fire
water
lightning
trees
herds

PENGUIN CLASSICS

METAMORPHOSES

PUBLIUS OVIDIUS NASO was born in 43 BC at Sulmo (Sulmona) in central Italy. Coming from a wealthy Roman family and seemingly destined for a career in politics, he held some minor official posts before leaving public service to write, becoming the most distinguished poet of his time. His published works include *Amores*, a collection of short love poems; *Heroides*, verse-letters written by mythological heroines to their lovers; *Ars Amatoria*, a satirical handbook on love; *Remedia Amoris*, a sequel to the *Ars*; and *Metamorphoses*, his epic work on change. He was working on *Fasti*, a poem on the Roman calendar, when, in AD 8, the emperor Augustus exiled him to Tomis on the Black Sea, far from Rome and the literary life he loved. The reason for this is unclear; the pretext was the immorality of *Ars Amatoria*, but there was probably a political aspect to the affair. He continued to write, notably *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, and revised *Fasti*. He never returned to Rome and died, in exile, in AD 17 or 18.

DAVID RAEBURN was educated at Charterhouse and Christ Church, Oxford. He followed a career as a Classics Teacher and as the headmaster of two schools. On retiring from the headship of Whitgift School in 1991, he returned to Oxford where he taught Greek and Latin to undergraduates for the Classics faculty and later for individual colleges. He is particularly interested in the performance aspects of classical poetry and is known for his productions of Greek tragedy with school and university students, mostly in the original, but also in his own translations. Another special love is Roman poetry of the Augustan period.

DENIS FEENEY was born and received his first education in New Zealand, and went to Oxford for his D.Phil. He is now the Giger Professor of Latin at Princeton University, having held posts in Wisconsin, Bristol and Oxford. He is the author of *The Gods in Epic: Poets and Critics of the Classical Tradition* (Oxford, 1991) and *Literature and Religion at Rome: Cultures, Contexts and Beliefs* (Cambridge, 1998).

RICHARD ASHDOWNE was born in 1977 and educated at the Judd School, Tonbridge, and New College, Oxford, from where he graduated in Classics in 2000. He has since continued his studies at Oxford and gone on to do further research in the field of linguistics, where he has specialized in the history of Latin and the Romance languages. As well as being a linguist and classicist, he is also a keen musician and composer, whose published works include his *Missa S. Michaelis* (Oriana, 2002).

OVID

Metamorphoses

A New Verse Translation

Translated by DAVID RAEBURN
with an Introduction by DENIS FEENEY

PENGUIN BOOKS

PENGUIN BOOKS

Published by the Penguin Group
Penguin Books Ltd, 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England
Penguin Putnam Inc., 375 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014, USA
Penguin Books Australia Ltd, 250 Camberwell Road, Camberwell, Victoria 3124, Australia
Penguin Books Canada Ltd, 10 Alcorn Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4V 3B2
Penguin Books India (P) Ltd, 11, Community Centre, Panchsheel Park, New Delhi – 110 017, India
Penguin Books (NZ) Ltd, Cnr Rosedale and Airborne Roads, Albany, Auckland, New Zealand
Penguin Books (South Africa) (Pty) Ltd, 24 Sturdee Avenue, Rosebank 2196, South Africa

Penguin Books Ltd, Registered Offices: 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England

www.penguin.com

First published 2004
13

Text copyright © David Raeburn, 2004
Introduction copyright © Denis Feeney, 2004
All rights reserved

The moral right of the translator has been asserted

Set in 10.25/12.25 pt PostScript Adobe Sabon
Typeset by Rowland Phototypesetting Ltd, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk
Printed in England by Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

Except in the United States of America, this book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser

ISBN-13: 978–0–140–44789–7

www.greenpenguin.co.uk

Contents

Preface ix
Chronology xi
Introduction xiii
Further Reading xxxv
Translator's Note xxxvii

Metamorphoses

BOOK 1 3

PROLOGUE – THE CREATION – THE FOUR AGES – THE GIANTS – LYCAÖN – THE FLOOD – DEUCALION AND PYRRHA – PYTHON – DAPHNE – IO (1) – INTERLUDE: PAN AND SYRINX – IO (2) – PHAËTHON (1)

BOOK 2 45

PHAËTHON (2) – CALLISTO – THE RAVEN AND THE CROW – OCYRHOË – BATTUS – AGLAUROS – EUROPA

BOOK 3 91

CADMUS – ACTAEON – SEMELE – TEIRESIAS – NARCISSUS AND ECHO – PENTHEUS AND BACCHUS (1) – ACOETES AND THE LYDIAN SAILORS – PENTHEUS AND BACCHUS (2)

BOOK 4 129

THE DAUGHTERS OF MINYAS (1) – PYRAMUS AND THISBE – MARS AND VENUS – LEUCOTHOË AND CLYTIË – SALMACIS AND HERMAPHRODITUS – THE DAUGHTERS OF MINYAS (2) – INO AND ATHAMAS – CADMUS AND HARMONIA – PERSEUS (1)

BOOK 5 172
PERSEUS (2) – MINERVA AND THE MUSES – CALLIOPE'S SONG: THE RAPE OF PROSERPINA; ARETHUSA; TRIPTOLEMUS AND LYNCUS – THE DAUGHTERS OF PIERUS

BOOK 6 208
ARACHNE – NIOBE – THE LYCIAN PEASANTS – MARSYAS – PELOPS – TEREUS, PROCNE AND PHILOMELA – BOREAS AND ORITHYIA

BOOK 7 246
MEDEA AND JASON – THE REJUVENATION OF AESON – THE PUNISHMENT OF PELIAS – MEDEA'S FLIGHT – THESEUS AND AEGEUS – MINOS AND AEACUS – THE PLAGUE AT AEGINA – THE BIRTH OF THE MYRMIDONS – CEPHALUS AND PROCRIS

BOOK 8 292
SCYLLA AND MINOS – THE MINOTAUR AND ARIADNE – DAEDALUS AND ICARUS – DAEDALUS AND PERDIX – MELEÄGER AND THE CALYDONIAN BOAR – ACHELOÜS, THE NAIADS AND PERIMELE – PHILEMON AND BAUCIS – ERYSICHTHON

BOOK 9 337
ACHELOÜS AND HERCULES – HERCULES AND NESSUS – THE DEATH OF HERCULES – ALCMENA AND GALANTHIS – DRYOPE – IOLAÜS AND CALLIRHOË'S SONS – MILETUS – BYBLIS – IPHIS

BOOK 10 380
ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE – CYPARISSUS – ORPHEUS' SONG: INTRODUCTION; GANYMEDE; HYACINTHUS; THE CERASTAE AND PROPOETIDES; PYGMALION; MYRRHA; VENUS AND ADONIS (1) – VENUS' STORY: ATALANTA AND HIPPOMENES – ORPHEUS' SONG: VENUS AND ADONIS (2)

BOOK 11 420
THE DEATH OF ORPHEUS – THE PUNISHMENT OF THE MAENADS – MIDAS – LAÖMEDON'S TREACHERY – PELEUS AND THETIS – PELEUS AT THE COURT OF CEŸX (1) – CEŸX'S STORY: DAEDALION – PELEUS AT THE COURT OF CEŸX (2) – CEŸX AND ALCYONE – AESACUS

BOOK 12 462
THE GREEKS AT AULIS – RUMOUR – CYCNUS – ACHILLES' VICTORY CELEBRATION – CAENIS – THE BATTLE OF THE LAPITHS AND CENTAURS – PERICLYMENUS – THE DEATH OF ACHILLES

BOOK 13 495
THE JUDGMENT OF ARMS – AJAX'S SUICIDE – THE FALL OF TROY – THE SUFFERINGS OF HECUBA – MEMNON – THE WANDERINGS OF AENEAS (1) – THE DAUGHTERS OF ANIUS – THE DAUGHTERS OF ORION – THE WANDERINGS OF AENEAS (2) – ACIS, GALATEA AND POLYPHEMUS – GLAUCUS AND SCYLLA (1)

BOOK 14 546
GLAUCUS AND SCYLLA (2) – THE WANDERINGS OF AENEAS (3) – THE SIBYL OF CUMAE – ACHAEMENIDES' STORY: ULYSSES' MEN IN POLYPHEMUS' CAVE – MACAREUS' STORY: ULYSSES AND CIRCE; PICUS, CANENS AND CIRCE – THE WANDERINGS OF AENEAS (4) – THE MUTINOUS COMPANIONS OF DIOMEDES – THE APULIAN SHEPHERD – THE SHIPS OF AENEAS – ARDEA – THE APOTHEOSIS OF AENEAS – AENEAS' DESCENDANTS – POMONA AND VERTUMNUS – IPHIS AND ANAXARETE – ROMULUS – THE APOTHEOSIS OF ROMULUS

BOOK 15 592
MYSCELUS – PYTHAGORAS – EGERIA AND HIPPOLYTUS – TAGES, ROMULUS' SPEAR, CIPUS – AESCULAPIUS – THE APOTHEOSIS OF JULIUS CAESAR – EPILOGUE

Notes 637
Glossary Index 671
Map of Ovid's Mediterranean World 724

Preface

This translation would have been impossible without the help of a number of commentaries, in particular those of William S. Anderson (Books 1–10: 2 vols., 1972, 1997), A. A. R. Henderson (Book 3: 1979), A. S. Hollis (Book 8: 1970), Neil Hopkinson (Book 13: 2000), A. G. Lee (Book 1: 1953) and G. M. H. Murphy (Book 11: 1972). D. E. Hill's four-volume edition of *Metamorphoses* (Aris and Phillips: 1985–2000) is invaluable on Ovid's sources and on many points of mythological and historical background. When in difficulty, I have often consulted the formidable commentary on the whole work in German by Franz Bömer (7 vols., 1969–86). In addition, Professor Philip Hardie most kindly allowed me to read Books 14 and 15 with the aid of his own material, which will form part of the full commentary on the *Metamorphoses* eventually to be published by the Fondazione Lorenzo Valla.

I have much appreciated the interest shown in the venture by colleagues and undergraduates at New College, Oxford, where much of the work was done. My very special thanks are due to Pat Dawson-Taylor and Andrew Johnson who between them typed out my manuscripts and subsequently processed a long series of revisions. Also to Denis Feeney for writing the Introduction and checking my summaries and notes in draft; to Richard Ashdowne for his painstaking work in compiling the Glossary Index and the map; and to my editor, Peter Carson, for his steady encouragement and detailed comments on the work in progress. Finally, to my wife, Mary Faith, who carefully read my early drafts as I produced them and made notes

which resulted in countless improvements. This project owes more than I can say to her moral and practical support; so the translation is dedicated to her.

DAR

Chronology

(Many of the dates, especially the publication dates for Ovid's works, are approximate and controversial.)

BC

43 20 *March*: Ovid born at Sulmo.

31 2 *September*: Battle of Actium; Octavian defeats Antony and Cleopatra.

28 Propertius 1.

27 Octavian becomes Princeps and Augustus.

25 Tibullus 1.

23 Horace *Odes* 1–3.

22 Propertius 2–3.

20 Ovid publishes the first edition of the *Amores*.

19 21 *September*: Virgil dies; his virtually finished *Aeneid* is published soon after.

Death of Tibullus; his second book is probably published posthumously.

16 Propertius 4. Propertius publishes no more, and the date of his death is unknown.

15 Ovid publishes the first collection of the *Heroides*, letters from heroines.

10 Ovid publishes the second edition of the *Amores* sometime around here. He then probably goes on to write a first version of the *Ars Amatoria*, in two books.

8 27 *November*: Horace dies.

2 By now Ovid has almost certainly written his (now lost) tragedy, *Medea*; he embarks on a process of revising his elegiac works, adding a third book to a revised *Ars Amatoria*,

publishing the *Remedia Amoris*, and adding the double epistles to the *Heroides*. After this process is complete (by ?AD 2), he is embarked on the *Fasti* and *Metamorphoses*.

AD

8 Ovid is relegated (in effect, exiled) to the Black Sea town of Tomis. His *Metamorphoses* is virtually complete and the *Fasti* half finished. He continues to work on the *Fasti* intermittently in exile, but never completes it.

9–12 Ovid composes the *Tristia* and the *Ibis*.

13 *Ex Ponto* 1–3 published.

14 9 *August*: Augustus dies. His adopted stepson, Tiberius, becomes emperor.

17 Ovid dies in exile. *Ex Ponto* 4 is published posthumously.

Introduction

Funny, devastating, flip, throat-catching – the moods of the *Metamorphoses* are as various as the hundreds of stories that form the poem's subject-matter. The title of the poem, *Metamorphoses*, is the Greek word for 'transformations', and the myths that provide the source material for Ovid's torrent of stories are all linked together by this theme of transformation, which Ovid, with an insight of characteristic genius, had at some moment realized to be the single potential unifying thread that ran through the chaotically diverse bundles of stories in the Greek and Roman traditions. A classical text with impeccable formal credentials and an encyclopaedic stock of Greek and Latin literary history, the *Metamorphoses* has nonetheless always appealed to iconoclastic readers, who have responded to its energy, verbal wit and subversive intelligence. Just as its author prophesied in the last lines of the poem, the *Metamorphoses* has been a success with a popular reading public ever since it left his study: 'The people shall read and recite my words. Throughout all ages, / If poets have vision to prophesy truth, I shall live in my fame.' The poem's fingerprints are everywhere in the European tradition, from the 'Pyramus and Thisbe' of Shakespeare's 'rude mechanicals' and the Adonis of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* to the 'Diana and Actaeon' of Titian and the *Tales from Ovid* of Ted Hughes. No one with an interest in European literature and art can afford not to know this poem.

It is a totally unexpected masterpiece. The ancient world had never produced anything like it before and would never see anything like it again. When the *Metamorphoses* appeared, its author was the most famous poet in the world, but his earlier

career could not have led anyone to expect that he would one day write a monstrous epic of myth, longer than Virgil's *Aeneid*, as long as Homer's *Odyssey*. From his adolescence the poet Ovid had appeared set for a completely different kind of fame.

Early Career

Publius Ovidius Naso was born on 20 March 43 BC, in the mountain town of Sulmo, some 90 miles east of Rome. Ovid is therefore one of the very first generation of Romans to be born on a date we can accurately plot, since only just over two years previously Julius Caesar had abolished the ramshackle lunar priestly calendar of the Roman Republic and replaced it (on 1 January 45 BC) with his new solar calendar, the product of the finest Greek science and, in effect, the calendar we still use. This new Julian calendar was to be the unlikely subject of one of Ovid's poems, the *Fasti*.[1] Ovid's birthplace, the modern town of Sulmona, still proudly claims the poet as its most famous son, adorning municipal insignia with his words *Sulmo mihi patria est* ('Sulmo is my homeland', *Tristia* 4.10.3). The local people, the Paeligni, had been at the centre of the fierce revolt of the Italian allies against Rome between 91 and 89 BC, and the capital of the rebels, 'Italica', had been located in Corfinium, just ten miles up the road from Sulmo. By Ovid's time that sense of anti-Roman local identity was only a memory (*Amores* 3.15.8–10), and Ovid grew to adolescence in a linguistic and educational environment that was thoroughly Roman.

His talent and his family's ambition took him to further education in the metropolis itself, where his precocious brilliance in the schools of rhetoric was still being talked about years after his death. He appeared to be on track for a career in the imperial service or the courts and senate, but he found – as he put it in an autobiographical poem towards the end of his life – that everything he tried to say kept coming out as verse (*Tristia* 4.10.25–6). After putting his foot on the lowest rung of the ladder of a political career and serving as a member of a lowly bureaucratic board called the 'Committee of Three', he abandoned public life, against the protests of his father, and devoted

himself completely to poetry. He claims that he was known for his recitations of poetry when he was still a teenager. In any event, by the time he was thirty he was famous all over the Empire for his *Amores* ('Loves'), poems in elegiac metre that still crackle with intelligence, ambition and panache. Virgil and Tibullus had died in 19 BC, when Ovid was not yet twenty-five; after that, Horace and Propertius were his only possible rivals for fame, and following their deaths, in Ovid's mid-thirties, he stood alone as the undisputed leading poet of Rome.

Inventive energy and driving self-reliance marked his writing from the start. Poetry about passionate love and the conflicts forced upon a well-born Roman by a life of love had been at the heart of Roman literature since Catullus, who died some ten years before Ovid was born. Following Catullus, a string of diverse and talented elegiac poets had in sequence collaborated on this tradition so as to produce a novel genre, known nowadays as Latin love elegy. The greatest of these poets, Propertius, was still actively writing when Ovid audaciously took it upon himself to make this well-acknowledged field uniquely his own, by cutting back on the expanding options of the genre and concentrating on its most essential elements. His major triumph was to make the tradition look as if it had always been destined to find its fulfilment in its Ovidian form. Although we now call this tradition 'Latin love elegy', it is virtually certain that we would be calling it something else, or not even regarding it as a tradition in the first place, if Ovid had never written. Each new phase of his career was to demonstrate the same phenomenal ability to put his own distinctive mark of ownership on a long-standing inheritance.

Ovid's poetic career carried him on to explore the theme of love in a variety of genres and contexts. He followed the *Amores* with another elegiac collection, the *Epistulae Heroidum* ('Letters from Heroines'). In these letters glamorous figures such as Helen, Penelope or Dido, often from the lofty genres of epic and tragedy, write to treacherous or inaccessible lovers and husbands. Here he shows the zestful relish for dissonance that marks so much of his work, not least the *Metamorphoses*. Characters and scenarios that the audience knows well from

other contexts are transmuted into a different genre and metre, with discordant effects that transform the way we think about both the old and the new contexts. He next took on the pose of the scientist of love, writing a series of didactic works that purport to do for sex what Lucretius had done for atomism and what Virgil had done for agriculture: *Ars Amatoria* ('Art of Love' / 'Handbook of Sex Technique'); *Remedia Amoris* ('Cures for Love' / 'How to Fall out of Love Now I've Taught You How to Fall In'); *Medicamina Faciei Femineae* ('Compounds for the Lady's Face'). These stunningly inventive and accomplished works show Ovid at the top of his comic form, and they open up a profoundly interesting theme, as they reveal how sex and love, the most apparently natural of all human processes, are experienced through societal conventions that are so deep we cannot recognize them as conventions.

Ovid and Augustus

In his early to mid forties, somewhere around 2 BC, Ovid appears to have drawn a formal line under his career as a love poet in the elegiac mode. It is at this stage of his career that we should probably place his only major work that does not survive, the tragedy *Medea*. It is at this stage, also, presumably after the *Medea*, that he began the simultaneous composition of two works far different in scale and style from anything he had written before, the *Fasti* ('Calendar') and the *Metamorphoses* ('Transformations'). The *Fasti* was still to be in elegiac metre, conventionally a metre used for comparatively short works, but it was planned to be in twelve books, one for each month of the Roman year. The *Metamorphoses* was to be even longer, fifteen books, three longer than the total of Virgil's *Aeneid*; and it was not going to be in the elegiac metre of Catullus or Propertius, but in Virgil's own metre, the dactylic hexameter of Homeric epic, with a mighty scope to match – the whole of human experience from the beginning of the world down to Ovid's own day.

The thematic range of these two poems was also very different from anything in his earlier work. In particular, Ovid displays

a keen interest in the nature of his contemporary society's rituals and power-structures, for he had been observing the new political order for the whole of his adult life. Unlike the poets of the generation before him, who had been personally affected by the chaos attending the disintegration of the Senatorial government of the Republic, Ovid had grown up in a political environment of comparative stability and calm. It is certainly true that his boyhood was lived against a background of civil strife and the growing threat of a new round of civil war between Mark Antony and Caesar Octavian, the adopted son of Julius Caesar, but he was still only twelve when Caesar Octavian won his definitive victory over Antony and Cleopatra at Actium on 2 September 31 BC. We should, likewise, bear in mind that it is a mistake to regard the years of Ovid's maturity as ones of an unruffled *status quo* in which everyone happily foresaw decades of relaxed peace to come. Octavian, who took the name Augustus and the informal title of 'Princeps', 'First Citizen', in 27 BC, never stopped experimenting as he consolidated his control over the Roman world, and people well knew that any chance event could mean a return to chaos: Augustus almost died of illness, for example, in 23 BC, at the age of only thirty-nine, and anxiety over the succession marked the new political dispensation, the Principate, from its earliest days. Still, in comparison with Virgil, who saw his family's estate confiscated to pay off veterans, or with Horace, who fought against Caesar Octavian at Philippi and had to rebuild his life from scratch, or with Propertius, who lost relatives in the fighting in central Italy, Ovid did not experience personal disaster in civil war as part of his adult life, and lived under conditions of civil tranquility that the Roman world had not known for a century.

We do not find in his poetry, then, the pendulum swings of intense anxiety and equally intense relief that may be found in Virgil, Horace or Propertius. The insouciance that so many readers detect in Ovid has something to do with the way in which he had the luxury of being able to take a lot for granted. What we do find in Ovid, however, is a highly intelligent contemporary's prolonged observation of the Principate as a gradually evolving institution, together with all the consequences of that

evolution for Roman politics, religion and society in general. These themes are of particular importance for the *Fasti*, which treats the Roman year as the backbone of a study of Roman religious and political institutions, but Ovid's interest in the power-structures of his society comes through very clearly in the *Metamorphoses* as well, especially in the last book, where we see the sweep of Roman and world history apparently culminating in the deification of Julius Caesar and the reign of his adopted son, Augustus. The problem of succession is a major theme of the last book, reflecting the obsessive interest contemporaries were compelled to take in the possible future destinies that awaited them after Augustus' inevitable departure. The last two books also show an astute comparison between the revived monarchy of Augustus and the first monarchy of Romulus, together with an intelligent appraisal of how the new monarchy diverges from the corporate and anti-individualistic ideals of the Roman Republic. When readers get to Book 15, they may contrast for themselves the attitude to personal power of Augustus and the Republican hero Cipus, or the self-aggrandizing religious policies of the Augustan monarchy as opposed to the religious solidarity displayed by the Senate and People of the Republic when they import the god Aesculapius from Greece to save the whole state from plague.

After some six or seven years' work, it seems that the *Fasti* was half-finished, at six books, and the *Metamorphoses* virtually finished, when in AD 8 catastrophe struck the poet. We will never know the details, but he was somehow involved in a scandal that touched the imperial family, although it is clear that he committed no actual crime. An outraged Augustus banished him into an informal state of exile, throwing into the charge for good measure the *Ars Amatoria*, which even some years after publication apparently still rankled the ageing and increasingly authoritarian Princeps. Augustus had poured a good deal of his prestige and credibility into legislation reforming the supposedly degenerate morals of his people; many modern readers see Ovid's response in the *Ars Amatoria* as a flippant puncturing of a hypocritical charade, and it looks as if Augustus read it more or less the same way. Ovid's place of

banishment was practically as far from Rome as could be found on the map – Tomis, modern Costanza on the Black Sea, on the very fringe of the Empire. Here Ovid lived for another nine or ten years, cut off from everything that had meant anything to him: his wife and daughter, his circle of friends, the whole metropolitan cultural experience. His courage and self-belief did not fail him, for he continued to write, trying to win pardon and justifying himself through the medium of his 'exile poetry', *Tristia* ('Sorrows') and *Epistulae Ex Ponto* ('Correspondence from the Black Sea'). The death of Augustus in AD 14 led only to the accession of his grim stepson, Tiberius, who also turned his face against the poet, and Ovid died some three years later, in his late fifties.

Structure and Scope

In one of his finest poems from exile, *Tristia* 1.7, Ovid says that the *Metamorphoses* was not quite finished when he was banished, and that he tried to burn it, so that existing copies of the poem were still rough and unpolished. There is no doubt, however, that his masterpiece is indeed complete. His claim in *Tristia* 1.7 is intended to establish a parallel between himself and Virgil, for when Virgil had died almost thirty years earlier his *Aeneid* had been genuinely unfinished, and there was a persistent story that the dying poet had ordered the poem to be burnt, only for his wishes to be overruled by Augustus. Ovid's tactic simultaneously establishes his similarities to Virgil as a classic of Latin literature, and reproaches Augustus for undervaluing him so drastically by contrast: the same Augustus who was now wantonly destroying Ovid had personally intervened to save the *Aeneid* and have it properly edited and preserved for posterity.

There is, as usual, a good deal of irony in this claim, not least because it was central to Ovid's self-definition that he could never occupy the same ideological niche as Virgil. Still, Ovid knew what he was doing when he made this oblique claim to be ranked with Virgil, who had been acknowledged for decades as the greatest Roman poet who had ever lived. It is only

comparatively recently that professional scholars have taken seriously the idea that the *Metamorphoses* is, in its own way, as great a poem as the *Aeneid* – although, as we shall see below, other poets and artists have always known this to be the case. The kaleidoscopic variety of the poem, its baffling shifts in register and mood, its manifold layers of irony and self-consciousness, its capacity to move readers deeply despite appearing to be all surface, its intensely intelligent and teasingly elusive wit – these are some of the factors that have made the poem central to the European tradition ever since it first appeared, and they are also the factors that have made the poem difficult for scholars to work on with the critical techniques they have used for more 'classical' works of literature.

The sheer scale and diversity of the poem make it hard to grapple with. The *Metamorphoses* spans the whole of time 'from the world's beginning / down to my own lifetime', as Ovid puts it in the Prologue to Book 1. Typically, he even includes more than this apparently total coverage, since he begins before time, before earth and sea and heaven (the first word of the narrative after the Prologue is 'Before'); and at the end he continues the momentum of his poem into the future, predicting his own immortal progress in reception ('I shall live in my fame'). Practically every major story of Greco-Roman myth, and many a previously minor one, finds a place in the poem: the household names of Hercules and Achilles and Romulus are there, together with creatures such as Salmacis, Clytië and Leucothoë, who would have been unfamiliar to all but the most learned members of his audience.

The scope of the poem is universal and comprehensive, and Ovid toys with his readers' expectation that such a massive narrative should have cohesion and structure, in the same way as 'proper' epics like the *Iliad* and *Aeneid*. The poem certainly does have patterns of order and arrangement, and one of the many pleasures of reading it lies in following the inexhaustible cunning Ovid displays in knitting together his diverse stories and in juggling his basic compositional unit, the book. The singing competition in Book 5, of which Minerva hears an account, is immediately followed by the weaving competition

in Book 6, where Minerva is a contestant against Arachne; the stories of human presumption that Minerva depicts on her tapestry are followed next by the tragic story of Niobe's appalling punishment for her presumption against the goddess Latona; Niobe's story is in turn followed by a comically downmarket story of another punishment inflicted on presumptuous people by this same goddess, Latona; the next story is the grotesquerie of the flaying of Marsyas, which is motivated by mention of, again, Minerva and of Apollo, the son of, again, Latona . . . and so on. The haphazard chain of association is entertaining, but it also reinforces the Ovidian theme of the very contingency of connectedness.

Still, any overarching scheme that attempts to impose too rigid an order invariably fails. There is, for example, a broad division into three parts of five books each, corresponding to the epochs of the gods, the heroes and of history. The epoch of the heroes begins with the introduction of the city of Athens in Book 6, and the epoch of history begins with the introduction of the city of Troy in Book 11. But these divisions are blurred by the poet, for the introduction of Athens should come at the beginning of Book 6, not 400 lines into the book, if the main lines of division are to be tidy, and when we get to Troy in Book 11, expecting to hear of its fall, we find that the city has already fallen – not once but twice – to mythical heroes.

Ovid's toying with such structural lines of division is symptomatic of his attitude to all kinds of divisions and categories. He mistrusts and dislikes anything that resembles a straitjacket, but he does not simply deny the importance of perceiving limits and divisions between different categories. If distinctions were meaningless there would be nothing but chaos, and Ovid is very careful in the first lines of his narrative in Book 1 to show how the world has moved away from its original state of Chaos precisely by a process of acquiring distinctions. Ovid's Chaos is not, as one might think, a tussle or jumble, but a great blandness without distinction and differentiation: 'the whole of nature displayed but a single / face' (1.6–7). And in this state of undifferentiation 'None of the elements kept its shape' (18), so that Ovid's poem could never have begun. What was needed was

distinction, and this is what divine nature provided: god 'severed', 'parted', 'separated', 'disentangled', 'gave ... separate places', 'divided the substance / of Chaos and ordered it ... in its different constituent members' (22–33). The final order of nature is one where it has 'its separate compartments' (69). Of course these compartments are not rigidly separate, since all through the poem we see individuals crossing between them as they change form, but without these compartments having identity and separateness in the first place, the changes of form would be impossible.

Transformation is the title of the poem and the single linking thread that unites the hugely various stories. As we repeatedly see, however, transformation is not just part of the way the stories work, and not just a human and philosophical theme of inexhaustible richness, but a dynamic that permeates every level and facet of the poem. In fact, Ovid's very first example of a transformation involves a part of the poem that is not strictly a part of the poem – the title. *Metamorphoses* (for Ovid, something more like *Metamorfoseis*) is a Greek word, like *Aeneid*, Virgil's title. In anticipation of the way in which the Greek inheritance will be Romanized in the course of the poem, this Greek word for transformation is transformed into Latin in Ovid's first line: *meta-morfoseis*, 'trans-formations', becomes *mutatas formas*, literally, 'changed forms'. At first one only notices that the sound of the Latin words for 'changed forms' is very like the sound of the Greek word, so as to reinforce the idea of similarity in translation; but then one realizes that in fact the Latin word for 'form', *forma*, has the same letters as the Greek word for 'form', except with the 'm' and 'f' transposed – *morfe*.[2] It is a disconcerting moment, as we see the very word for 'form' undergoing a metamorphosis as it moves across the linguistic divide, while still retaining all of its essential individual elements.

Ovid immediately shows us how important the question of form and identity is for him when he opens the poem with a brilliant play on the question of what kind of formal identity the very poem itself will have. For a poet in a literary tradition as formalized and self-conscious as the Greek and Roman one,

it is perhaps not surprising that one of the most important categories to put under pressure will be the formal and generic, but in the opening of the *Metamorphoses* Ovid manages to turn his whole previous poetic career into the set-up for a dazzling punchline about the generic category of his poem.

As we have seen, with the exception of his tragedy, *Medea*, everything Ovid had written before the *Metamorphoses* had been in the same metre, the elegiac couplet. This metre was composed of a line of six feet, a dactylic hexameter, the same line used for continuous narration by Homer and Virgil, followed by a slightly shorter line, really of two and a half feet times two, but conventionally called a pentameter ('five-footer').[3] This was a very versatile metre, used for all sorts of purposes by Greek authors, but by Ovid's time it had come to be strongly marked in the Roman tradition as a metre for poetry from the 'lighter' or 'lower' genres, such as love poetry, and it had therefore increasingly been identified by opposition to the 'grander' and 'higher' genre of epic poetry, composed in the parent metre of Homeric dactylic hexameters. The Roman poets in the elegiac tradition had constructed a genealogy for their unpompous and deft style in which the third-century BC Greek Hellenistic poet Callimachus was the founding father. They alluded repeatedly to Callimachus' polemical introduction to his elegiac collection of origin stories, *Aetia*. Here Callimachus defends his small-scale and highly wrought art against the long-winded and traditional stuff favoured by his competitors, claiming that he has been taught by Apollo that his 'slight' and 'fine' poetry is superior to their preferred long, single, continuous poems about kings and heroes. Callimachus' Prologue made a profound impact on the Roman poets of the generation before Ovid. Virgil, for example, in his first collection of poetry, the *Eclogues*, represents himself as wanting originally to write epic but receiving Callimachean advice from Callimachus' god, Apollo (*Eclogue* 6.3–5): what the modern poet should write is not epic but a *deductum carmen*, a poem that has been drawn out the way a thread is drawn out in spinning, so that it becomes a fine strand out of the original glob of raw wool.

Now, in the second line of the *Metamorphoses*, at the very

point where his audience might have expected to hear the metrical marker in the pentameter of Ovid's characteristic elegiac couplet, Ovid transforms the line into the hexameter of grand epic as he invokes the gods and tells them 'it is *you* who have even / transformed my art' – that is, from elegiac to hexameter. It must have been even more of a shock for his first readers to carry on and find Ovid in the next lines describing the new poem as a *perpetuum carmen*, a 'continuous poem', for this phrase is a translation of the sardonic Greek phrase which Callimachus had used to describe his despised adversaries' preferred kind of poem. Yet Ovid introduces an extra twist, for the verb he uses to describe what he wants the gods to do to this 'continuous poem' is *deducite*, 'spin . . . a thread', the same verb that Virgil's Apollo had used to describe the 'spinning out' process characteristic of the best modern poetry. The new poem will be an oxymoronic compound, both Callimachean in its finely spun aesthetics and continuous as well, epic in its sweep and ambition.

Literary Heritage

The poem, then, makes itself generically uncategorizable. Again, this is not to say that distinctions of genre are unimportant in the poem. Because the *Metamorphoses* is always refusing to be one thing, it is not the case that the differences between the various individual things it is refusing to be do not matter. Throughout the poem Ovid continues to exploit the imaginative and moral possibilities of hybridism. The weaving competition between Arachne and Minerva in Book 6 is, in part, an example of a competition between two inherently opposed views of the world, as expressed in two different generic modes. Minerva's tapestry shows majestic and dignified gods in an ordered pattern, punishing presumption and acting in comprehensible ways. Arachne's tapestry shows a wilfully unepic view of the world and its divine governing forces, with a pell-mell series of images of randomly topsy-turvy mutation and seduction. Some readers think it is Arachne's vision that is more true to the poem's overall

vision of human experience, and some think it is Minerva's, but in Ovid's universe each view of the world needs the other as its double, and inevitably exaggerates by polarization.

As in the case of Arachne and Minerva, epic is the genre that Ovid usually entertains as his foil. It is remarkable just how much of Homer, Apollonius and Virgil the *Metamorphoses* manages to encompass somehow or other. Great tracts of those epic plots and their accompanying characteristics find their way into the poem. The gods of the epic tradition, for example, are mercilessly exposed. Juno's hellish vindictiveness is re-enacted again and again, and Ovid gives us a series of hilarious set-pieces on Jupiter's bluff and pompous smugness, a smugness that masks an unfathomable capacity for violence. Ovid's treatments of such epic set-pieces as the battle, catalogue or hunt can provide some of his finest moments of comedy and of literary criticism. Once you have read his burlesque version of epic battle narrative in Book 12, for example, with the battle of the Lapiths and centaurs, it is very hard to read Homer or Virgil in quite the same way again, for he has made you actually think about what is involved in the elaborate versification of disgusting brutality and agony, instead of just taking it for granted, as so many readers of Homer and Virgil do. In both of these examples, as is usually the case, Ovid is not inventing an issue but responding to something already there in his models. Homer and Virgil are, in their own way, just as aware as Ovid is of the problem of aestheticized violence or divine unaccountability, but Ovid knows that the inertia of the tradition keeps desensitizing us to the issues.

As we have already seen, epic for Ovid is not just a narrative genre, but a way of viewing the world. The whole epic idea that human actions and history make sense and are part of a meaningful pattern is ultimately called into question by Ovid's poem. The enormous speech of Pythagoras at the beginning of the final book is notoriously hard to assess, but it certainly presents a compelling view of a world of flux in which even the Roman empire is merely one passing feature of the world like any other. In the end, this vision of mutability is inconsistent

with the sense of durability and direction that Augustus was trying to impose on the Roman empire, a sense that was, for Ovid, represented emblematically by the quintessential Augustan epic, Virgil's *Aeneid*. This Ovidian perspective has been memorably expressed by E. J. Kenney: 'For him the Augustan settlement was not, as it had been for Virgil, the start of a new world, *nouus saeclorum ordo*, but another sandbank in the shifting stream of eternity.'[4]

In addition to epic, virtually every significant ancient genre is somehow made part of the poem. We can detect what looks suspiciously like the later novel lurking beneath the stories of the exotic East at the beginning of Book 4: among these, the story of Pyramus and Thisbe was to have the most potent afterlife. Tragedy's agonized soliloquies and moral dilemmas figure prominently, as in the story of the competing claims upon Althaea, mother of Meleäger, in Book 8. Individual tragedies with their plots can regularly be discerned behind the lines of the *Metamorphoses*. Sophocles' now lost *Tereus* is the template for the excruciating tragedy of Procne and Philomela in Book 6, and his still extant *Trachiniae* provides the backbone for the narrative of the river-god Acheloüs in Book 9. By far the most popular Greek tragedian in Ovid's day was Euripides, and Euripides recurs constantly in the poem: we glimpse his *Bacchae* in the Theban stories of Books 3 and 4, his *Trojan Women* and *Hecuba* in the fall of Troy of Book 13, and his *Hippolytus* revived in an Italian landscape in Book 15 – although only Ovid could have thought of rewriting the messenger-speech of Euripides' *Hippolytus* in the first person, so that instead of a messenger telling of the hero's grisly death, the hero gets a chance to tell us all the horrific details himself. The fashionable genre of pastoral poetry receives devastating attention in Book 1, when Mercury lulls the monster Argus to sleep by singing him an origin story of pastoral. Mercury is only halfway through the story of Pan and Syrinx when Argus nods off; although Mercury proceeds immediately to chop off his head, Ovid with mock earnestness fills out the rest of the story for his readers so that we do not miss it. Ovid is not the only person to feel

bored to death by the affectations of pastoral, but as we see his character Argus undergoing the fate of being actually bored to death we see that no one has expressed this disgust more memorably.

A vital part of Ovid's poetic education was the 'new poetry' of Catullus and his generation, and the *Metamorphoses* shows a fascination with their favoured form of the epyllion, or mini-epic. Taking as their model Callimachus' *Hecale*, in which the great hero Theseus is shown not engaged in derring-do but eating scraps for dinner with an old peasant woman, Catullus and his friends produced hexameter poems of a few hundred lines that looked at the heroic age from unexpected and freakish angles. These poems homed in on bizarre amatory passions, cultivated a precious style, and revelled in the elaborate description of artistic objects from other media (the so-called 'ecphrasis'); they also explored narrative eccentricities as they looped back on themselves, confused time-frames, covered their narrative tracks and generally did their best to make it hard to keep a grip on what was the 'real' story and what was the digression. All of these features find their way into Ovid's poem. The descriptive ecphrasis appeals to Ovid's highly developed visual sense, and the palace of the Sun in Book 2 or the tapestries of Minerva and Arachne in Book 6 are masterpieces of the genre. Ovid's interest in narrative technique is alive on every page, and his approach has its roots in the mazes of the epyllion. Orpheus takes over the song, for example, in Book 10, and gives us a series of bizarre love stories, so absorbing that it is easy to forget that he and not Ovid is the narrator. At the end of Book 10 we see a set of 'Russian dolls', as Ovid shows us Orpheus telling his audience of trees and beasts about how Venus tells Adonis the story of Atalanta and Hippomenes.

The schools of rhetoric in which Ovid first cut his teeth and made his name have left their mark everywhere in his poetry. His heroes and, especially, his heroines will regularly launch into lengthy internal dialectic, arguing the rights and wrongs of potential courses of action, just as the students of rhetoric did in their set-piece training exercises known as 'declamations'.

Where the student would argue whether a rapist should be executed or made to marry his victim, or whether Agamemnon should sacrifice his daughter, Ovid's characters will debate whether to sacrifice their father for a potential lover (Scylla in Book 8), or whether to have sex with their brother or father (Byblis in Book 9, Myrrha in Book 10). People have often criticized Ovid's declamations for their unreality and artificiality, but they forget that every ancient author who talks about declamation also criticizes it for its unreality and artificiality. Ovid is ahead of his critics, in other words. He is not simply reproducing declamatory style because that is what people expected and what he was good at, he is making the adequacy of the form part of his subject. And he is capitalizing on the hysterical and manic view of the world that the hothouse environment of the declamation schools had refined over the years. If you glance at the index of the standard modern edition of the Elder Seneca's declamations, from the early first century AD, you get a hair-raising vision of a universe of vice, paranoia and excess: under 'A' we find 'abortion', 'accomplices', 'accusation, motives for', 'actors', 'adoption', 'adultery' (many entries here), 'adversity, triumphs over' . . .; under 'B', 'banquets', 'barrenness', 'bastards', 'beggars' . . . 'blindness', 'boats, disabled', 'brothels, see prostitutes', 'buildings', 'burial', 'burning of books'.[5] This is a universe that readers of the *Metamorphoses* will instantly recognize.

Ovid had read voraciously since childhood and had thought hard about the whole Greek and Roman literary tradition. In a sense, the entirety of ancient literature and myth is the background for his poem, although the particular poetic sources for the theme of transformation itself are some distinctly out-of-the-way pieces of Hellenistic learning, the *Heteroeumena* ('Metamorphoses') of Nicander, and the *Ornithogonia* ('Generation of Birds') of Boios (or Boio). In this medley of styles, there is no one genre that dominates, but the most consistent pose is that of the knowing, learned and ironic Hellenistic master, best embodied in the figure of Callimachus. Like Callimachus, Ovid knows and loves the traditions of his literary past, but refuses to be intimidated or enslaved by them. Everything is

to be invigorated by unexpected perspectives, everything is to be made new.

Themes

We have already noted that the theme of transformation allows Ovid to bring together into one frame any myth he wants to include. In addition to whatever else it might be, the *Metamorphoses* is an encyclopaedia of myth: Ovid's insight that transformation could be the unifying factor in such an encyclopaedia is comparable in its power to the insight he displays in the *Fasti*, where he saw that the Roman calendar could provide the thread for an encyclopaedic enquiry into Roman religion. In aiming at constructing a compendium of myth, he succeeded beyond any expectation he could conceivably have had, because Graeco-Roman myth in Europe since the fall of the Roman empire has been Ovidian myth – even the *category* of Graeco-Roman myth is dependent on Ovid. Apart from Homer's Troy and Odysseus, Sophocles' Oedipus and Virgil's Dido, it is hard to think of a Graeco-Roman myth which is common coin in contemporary culture that is not an Ovidian myth.

Ovid's myths cover an extraordinary range of experience, and he displays a penetrating psychological knowledge of the variety of human motivations and delusions. In the face of this variety and range, readers have regularly tried to isolate what the unifying theme of metamorphosis might be. This is not easy. Metamorphosis can be a liberation in this poem, or a claustrophobic nightmare; it can be banal, or sublime, a realization of a person's possibilities or 'a savage reduction',[6] sometimes an apparent appendage with no evident link or motive. The main connecting thread is an interest in identity: what is it about a person that makes them that person, and what is it about humans that makes them human? As one human character after another transgresses into different categories of the animate and inanimate, the poet charts the bizarre mixture of convention and nature that cumulatively works to establish what we take to be normal for humans. Books 9 and 10 take this interest to the limit, as Ovid and then Orpheus give us successive stories of

aberrant sexual desire, with successive heroines battering on the glass walls of convention that divide them from other worlds – human, animal or divine – where their desires are normal.

Ovid works throughout to animate the question of who we think we are, and how we think about who we think we are. The stories in which people are alienated from themselves are the most disturbing vehicles for exploring this question. In particular, the metamorphoses in the appalling stories of rape often capture the sensation of being forced to conceive of yourself in terms totally different from the ones you had taken for granted, as you realize that who *you* thought you were no longer means anything. In Book 2, for example, an Arcadian nymph becomes one of Jupiter's many rape victims. Ovid does not tell us her name, Callisto. Ovid's audience, familiar with the tale, would have known the name anyway, but its omission is significant. In Greek, Callisto means 'most beautiful', but the very beauty that attracted Jupiter and caused her ruin is obliterated by the experience, as Juno turns her rage upon the nymph, and 'Most Beautiful' sees her familiar body, no longer her or hers, changing into the unrecognizable fur and snout of a bear.

In the *Metamorphoses* Ovid continues to be Rome's great expert on love, and virtually all of the most memorable stories explore the realms of love and sexuality. Ovid unforgettably evokes the sensation of sexual obsession (Tereus in Book 6, Scylla in Book 8, Byblis in Book 9, Myrrha in Book 10), and his ability to take us into the mind of aberrant compulsion is profoundly disturbing. He is particularly fascinated by the question of the right degree of distance and identification between lover and beloved. His most famous story, of Narcissus and Echo, probes this conundrum. The two stories had originally been separate, but when Ovid brings them together for the first time he creates an image of two opposite and complementary aberrations from a healthy sexuality, for Narcissus is too fixated upon himself, and Echo is too fixated on someone else. Ovid's fascination with love does not stop with aberration. His interest in marriage stands out, in particular. After Homer, who could do anything, portraits of a marriage are vanishingly rare in ancient literature, but Ovid gives us Deucalion and Pyrrha in

Book 1, Baucis and Philemon in Book 8 and Ceÿx and Alcyone in Book 11. Most striking of all is the story of Cephalus and Procris in Book 7. Their tale could form the plot of a Victorian novel, with its initial fidelity, lapse into adultery, forgiveness and eventual destruction by morbid obsessive jealousy.

Such snapshot summaries of different plots can make Ovid look rather pompous, or earnest, when in fact it is his consistent refusal to be earnest that most typifies his style. The wit is everywhere and can destabilize any subject. When Julius Caesar is becoming a god, for example, at the end of the poem, it is very hard to keep a straight face as Ovid exploits etymological play on the two current explanations of the name 'Caesar'. The first etymological explanation was from the verb 'cut', *caedo*, so that the family was named from an ancestor who was delivered by what we still call 'Caesarian section'. Ovid reminds us of this etymology when Jupiter tells Venus to snatch Caesar's soul 'from his *cut*-ridden body' (*caeso de corpore*, 15.840). The alternative explanation for the family's name was from *caesaries*, the Latin word for a full head of hair; no surprise, then, to see the soul of the famously bald Caesar turning into a 'comet', which is Greek for a 'hairy' star. The moments of wit can occur in contexts of horror that call the very word 'wit' into question. What do we make of Marsyas' cry in Book 6, as he is being flayed alive? – '"Don't rip me away from myself!"' (385).

More shocking yet are the four lines Ovid devotes to a description of Philomela's tongue jerking on the ground after it has been cut out by Tereus, in Book 6: the amputated tip quivers and murmurs, it is like the severed tail of a snake as it tries to reach its mistress's feet (557–60). Such moments are an affront to usual canons of taste, and those who have seen Shakespeare's highly Ovidian *Titus Andronicus* will recognize the composite thrill of aesthetic and moral disgust that accompanies these grotesque violations of form.

At such moments, Ovid can resemble the type of 'decadent' artist to which Vladimir Nabokov has been compared, 'an artist who, while not necessarily corrupt or cruel, sensational or over-ingenious, is liable to make such an impression, in his evident wish to secure certain sorts of novel or striking effect'.[7]

The extreme difficulty of doing simultaneous justice to Ovid's aesthetic and moral dimensions is in general reminiscent of the problems facing critics of Nabokov, who is in many ways the closest modern parallel to Ovid as far as the dialectic between style and content is concerned. Nabokov exhibits an Ovidian obsession with formalism, wit and parody, resolutely proclaiming his realm to be a pure art of aesthetic bliss, forswearing messages, values and social or moral relevance; like Ovid, he maintains ambiguities of atmosphere and intention, and has an authorial voice that is abstracted, intangible, yet somehow relentlessly present. Despite these heartfelt artistic stances, readers of Ovid and Nabokov respond to the intuition of an intense moral dimension, which resists the kind of elucidation we might expect to win from other authors: 'He is an unsettling writer as well as a funny one because he is deep where he looks shallow, moving when he seems flippant.'[8] Nabokov refers (with irony, naturally) to this moral dimension in the following quotation, which could be seen as a description of the fate that befell Ovid around the end of the twentieth century: 'I believe that one day a reappraiser will come and declare that, far from having been a frivolous firebird, I was a rigid moralist kicking sin, cuffing stupidity, ridiculing the vulgar and cruel – and assigning sovereign power to tenderness, talent, and pride.'[9]

Impact

Analogies only take one so far, and Ovid differs from Nabokov above all in the range of his ambition. He meant to construct a repository of myth that would accommodate every dimension of human experience, and that would make the Greek store of myth available for a completely different culture to work on as it saw fit. The staggering extent of his success is most evident in the impact that the *Metamorphoses* has had on other creative artists ever since it first appeared, an impact that shows no sign of abating even in the contemporary world, where so few people know Latin. Indeed, Ovid's poem is having a new lease of life as it approaches its two thousandth birthday in 2008, with highly popular dramatizations on both sides of the Atlantic, and

adaptations by some of the modern world's most distinguished poets, most notably Ted Hughes (1997). This is only the latest chapter in a story that begins in the generation immediately after Ovid's death. The *Metamorphoses* bulks as large as the *Aeneid* in the imagination of the first-century AD poets Lucan, Seneca and Statius, while it is the main repository of antiquity for the poets of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. The poem's impact on the visual arts is likewise so pervasive as to be incalculable, with the names of Titian, Bernini and Rubens only the most obvious ones that first come to mind. There is no space here to do more than refer the reader to the numerous recent excellent treatments of Ovid's influence on European art and literature (see Further Reading). For me, the point was summed up by a Princeton undergraduate who had never read the *Metamorphoses* before. Halfway through our course she visited the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and returned after the weekend intoxicated by her rediscovery of the familiar collections: 'It's all Ovid!'

Notes

1 This poem can be read in the Penguin Classics edition, ed. and trans. A. J. Boyle and R. D. Woodard (Harmondsworth, 2000).

2 F. Ahl, *Metaformations: Soundplay and Wordplay in Ovid and Other Classical Poets* (Ithaca, NY, 1985), p. 59.

3 Tennyson's parody gives some idea of the feel of the elegiac couplet: 'These lame hexameters the strong-winged music of Homer! / No – but a most burlesque barbarous experiment', 'On Translations of Homer' (1863), lines 1–2.

4 E. J. Kenney, *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature II: Latin Literature*, ed. E. J. Kenney and W. V. Clausen (Cambridge, 1982), p. 441.

5 M. Winterbottom, *The Elder Seneca*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass., 1974).

6 Leonard Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven and London, 1986), p. 66, on Lycaön in Book 1. On the theme of metamorphosis, see also Andrew Feldherr in *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, ed. Philip Hardie (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 163–79.

7 John Bayley, in Peter Quennell (ed.), *Vladimir Nabokov: A Tribute* (London, 1979), p. 42.
8 Michael Wood, writing of Nabokov, *not* Ovid, in *The Magician's Doubts: Nabokov and the Risks of Fiction* (Princeton, 1994), p. 8.
9 Vladimir Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* (New York, 1973), p. 193.

Further Reading

Ahl, F., *Metaformations: Soundplay and Wordplay in Ovid and Other Classical Poets* (Ithaca, NY, 1985)

Barkan, L., *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven and London, 1986)

Bate, J., *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford, 1993)

Brown, S. A., *The Metamorphoses of Ovid: Chaucer to Ted Hughes* (London, 1999)

Due, O. S., *Changing Forms: Studies in the Metamorphoses of Ovid* (Copenhagen, 1974)

Forbes-Irving, P. M. C., *Metamorphosis in Greek Myths* (Oxford, 1990)

Fränkel, H., *Ovid: A Poet Between Two Worlds* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1945)

Galinsky, K., *Ovid's Metamorphoses: An Introduction to the Basic Aspects* (Oxford and Berkeley, 1975)

Hardie, P., *Ovid's Poetics of Illusion* (Cambridge, 2002)

Hardie, P. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid* (Cambridge, 2002)

Hardie, P., Barchiesi, A. and Hinds, S. E. (eds.), *Ovidian Transformations: Essays on Ovid's Metamorphoses and its Reception* (Cambridge, 1999)

Hinds, S. E., *The Metamorphosis of Persephone: Ovid and the Self-conscious Muse* (Cambridge, 1987)

Hinds, S. E., 'Ovid', in S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth (eds.), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 1084–7

Kenney, E. J., 'Ovid', in E. J. Kenney and W. V. Clausen (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature* II: *Latin Literature* (Cambridge, 1982), 420–57

Martindale, C. (ed.), *Ovid Renewed: Ovidian Influences on Literature and Art from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 1988)

Myers, S., *Ovid's Causes: Cosmogony and Aetiology in the Metamorphoses* (Ann Arbor, 1994)

Otis, B., *Ovid as an Epic Poet* (Cambridge, 1970)

Skulsky, H., *Metamorphosis: The Mind in Exile* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1981)

Solodow, J., *The World of Ovid's Metamorphoses* (Chapel Hill, 1988)

Tissol, G., *The Face of Nature: Wit, Narrative, and Cosmic Origins in Ovid's Metamorphoses* (Princeton, 1997)

Wheeler, S., *A Discourse of Wonders: Audience and Performance in Ovid's Metamorphoses* (Philadelphia, 1999)

Wieden Boyd, B. (ed.), *Brill's Companion to Ovid* (Leiden, 2002)

Wilkinson, L. P., *Ovid Recalled* (Cambridge, 1955)

Translator's Note

Of all the major literary works which we have inherited from ancient Rome, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is arguably the most enjoyable to read for pleasure. Scholars have shown how its author originally composed this monumental series of stories for a sophisticated audience well familiar with the various Greek and Latin models on which they are based. At the same time, the poet evidently reckoned that this achievement would survive 'throughout all ages' (Epilogue, 15.878). He has been proved right, and that can only be because successive generations have found him instantly accessible and entertaining. Ovid is, quite simply, a brilliant story-teller, whose powers of human observation and vivid description transcend the taste, conventions and erudition of his own period. That also must explain why the *Metamorphoses* inspired so much new literature in the second millennium, from Chaucer through Shakespeare down to Ted Hughes in our own day, not to speak of the poem's immense influence on medieval and Renaissance painting and sculpture.

This translation, therefore, aims primarily to appeal to a new readership which knows little or no Latin and may not necessarily be familiar with the classical world generally. I have not been concerned, though, to revamp Ovid for the twenty-first century, but rather to reflect his detailed meaning as faithfully and clearly as I could, in a style which captured the flowing movement of his verse and the lively spirit of his story-telling for a modern audience.

I have also started from the assumption that Ovid designed his long poem to be delivered aloud in acceptable lengths. In all classical poetry (and a great deal of prose for that matter) the

sound of the unfolding language was an inseparable part of its sense. We know that poets in ancient Rome gave public recitations of their work and that Ovid himself did so at an early age. We can be sure too that Ovid's books were circulated for private consumption and doubtless were available for reading in the public libraries which existed in Augustan Rome. If people read silently in those days, it is still self-evident that Roman poetry and artistic prose, even when studied in private, were meant to be listened to with the mind's ear as well as perused with the eye. We should not lose sight either of Ovid's dramatic quality, seen especially in the long speeches of appeal or internal debate which he puts in his characters' mouths. These bear witness not only to the poet's rhetorical training but also to the influence of the Greek tragedians, Sophocles and Euripides, no less than the epic traditions of Homer, Apollonius and Virgil.

It is helpful, I suggest, to think of each of the fifteen books as a skilfully constructed 'unit of performance', lasting an average of about seventy minutes – a reasonable length of time for a reciter to hold an audience's attention. Of course, the design of the whole poem is an extraordinary achievement in itself; the work is certainly not a hotch-potch, even if its scheme cannot be too precisely pinned down. The end of each book, as in any ongoing serial, is carefully planned to anticipate the next 'instalment'. But each book also has its own internal design, to be seen sometimes in thematic links but chiefly in the variety and contrasts it displays. Less obviously, a book's ending will always be found to be linked with its beginning by what is known as 'ring composition', in the form of some verbal or thematic echo.

My general aim, then, was to be entertaining in serial form and also readable aloud. How was I to put this into practice? One question was that of idiom. Ovid's own vocabulary is not, for the most part, elaborately poetic; most of the words that he uses were current in normal Latin parlance. I therefore decided that the idiom of my translation should, as far as possible, be natural and spontaneous, avoiding archaism but without being over-colloquial. It was also important to respond to the varying tone of the different stories.

As I had decided to compose this new translation in verse, another crucial question was the one of verse form. Ovid wrote his *Metamorphoses* in dactylic hexameters, the standard line adopted by Greek and Roman poets composing in the epic or didactic genres. The repeated hexameter (only used by Ovid in this one work), coupled with skilful variation in the placing of sense-pauses, is an essential aspect of the poem's style. So also is the elegant convention which allowed Roman poets to exploit the inflexions of the Latin language to abandon normal word-order and create artificial, but beautifully significant, sentence structures within the framework of their chosen metre. The translator who is tied by the regular patterns of English word order can only aspire to that kind of elegance in a very limited way; but a standard repeated form of line can still serve extremely well.

In English the traditional metre for narrative poetry, as for poetic drama, has been the iambic pentameter; and translators of the *Metamorphoses* have commonly used this, whether in rhyming couplets or blank verse, with economical and stylish results. I have preferred a metre which was closer to Ovid's dactylic hexameter; that is, in technical terms, a verse with a rhythmical pulse of six stressed syllables, which may each be separated by two unstressed syllables rather than just one, as in an iambic line. This, I felt, would best reflect the relaxed flow and tone of Ovid's narrative as I perceived it, and allow me more space to communicate his meaning on a line-for-line basis. An exact assimilation to Ovid's hexameter is, of course, impossible, as Latin metre is based not on stress but on syllabic 'quantity', long or short. However, an English line of six main 'beats', each separated by one or two unstressed syllables, with the flexibility (not in the Latin hexameter) to use either stressed or unstressed syllables at its beginning and end, seemed to offer the kind of approximation I was looking for.

In consequence of the decision over metre, the number of lines in the translation is very close to that in the original. I have occasionally compressed five lines of Ovid into four and, more rarely, expanded five to six. Lines treated as interpolations have been omitted, so that in the end the translation totals about

11,870 lines as compared with 11,995 in the original. For purposes of reference, the line-numbering follows that of the Latin text, and correspondence with that should be accurate within one or, at the most, two lines.

The translation has not been based on any one edition of the Latin text. Where a reading is obviously corrupt or in dispute, I have made my own decision after consulting various authorities. How close is my version to the original? As close as I could make it, within the limits of clarity, idiomatic English and my chosen metre; but students who need help with translating the original Latin will probably be better served by one of the more literal versions available. In the interests of a flowing narrative, I have felt free to recast the structure of Ovid's sentences; I have sometimes amplified his meaning to help a modern reader where, for example, a brief allusion would have been immediately intelligible to his own audience. Similarly, I have been inclined to compress where Ovid elegantly says the same thing twice in different ways, if I found that this sounded simply redundant in English. Where Ovid uses a variety of proper names to refer to the same character, I have generally stuck to one, except with well-known equivalents like Jupiter/Jove, Apollo/Phoebus and Minerva/Pallas/Athena. It has seemed sensible too to disregard the poetic convention whereby Ovid, for metrical reasons, sometimes apostrophizes characters and uses the second person to make a plain statement about them. In such cases, the third person has been used to avoid artificiality.

The summaries which precede the fifteen books are designed to give an overview of each one in turn, to suggest what may be specially worth looking out for, and also to aid the reader's appreciation of the whole poem's continuity as well as its constant variety. The notes (signalled by an asterisk) offer more background material on points of detail and supply cross-references where appropriate. Further information about characters and places may be found in the Glossary Index. Both summaries and notes refer selectively to Ovid's sources for those who are interested; but the reader may well prefer simply to enjoy the stories themselves as Ovid tells them.

Since the translation is intended to be read aloud or heard

with the mind's ear, guidance is also offered on the assumed stressing and pronunciation of the Latin proper names. Modern practice varies widely, even among professional classicists. The Glossary Index is therefore prefaced by a statement of the rules I have adopted for the purposes of my rhythmical design (with very rare exceptions for the sake of euphony). The stressing of individual names is given both there and also, unless it is obvious or very well known, where each one occurs for the first time in any book. I have thought this important since the flow of the verse will be interrupted if, for example, Ulysses is pronounced, as often today, with an accent on the first syllable rather than on the second, as in the Greek Odysseus.

Incidentally, is the poem's title to be pronounced *Metamorphóses* or *Metamórphoses*? Strictly speaking, the former is more correct, as the second *o* in the original Greek word is long. Those, however, who prefer the second may quote the example of Shakespeare.

In conclusion, it has been a strange challenge to try to bring Ovid alive in present-day English nearly 2000 years after his colossal work was in composition. At the end of the task, I am conscious that the hardest element in the *Metamorphoses* to do justice to is its verbal wit, which can only be properly appreciated in the original Latin. I hope, however, that my readers will be able to share my enjoyment of the poet's humour, particularly in the characterization of Jupiter and Juno, and the subtle delicacy of his human observation. Those things apart, if I have succeeded in communicating a little of Ovid's extraordinary power and versatility as a story-teller to another generation or two, the labour will be well rewarded.

Metamorphoses

BOOK 1

In a short *Prologue* (1–4) Ovid announces his theme of metamorphosis: his stories of change will form one continuous poem, ranging in time from the beginning of the universe to Ovid's own lifetime.

The first great change is *The Creation* of the Universe (5–88) out of Chaos, culminating in the appearance of Man. Ovid's grand description draws on a variety of poetic and philosophical sources, including the earlier Roman poet Lucretius (first century BC). We will naturally compare it with the biblical account in Genesis, chapters 1 and 2. The process of change continues through *The Four Ages* (89–150) of early human existence, viewed as a degeneration from natural innocence and abundance to a world governed by selfishness and aggression. At this stage *The Giants* (151–62) attempt to oust the gods from their home on Olympus but are struck down by Jupiter's lightning. The Earth transforms their blood into new men whose brutality is true to their origin.

Human depravity is exemplified by *Lycaön* (163–252), the savage king of Arcadia. Jupiter calls an assembly to indicate his intention to destroy mankind; but in response to objections from the other gods, he promises to breed a new and better race. Mankind's destruction follows in Ovid's description of *The Flood* (253–312) and its transforming effects. (The story of a world-wide flood recurs in the Greek and Near Eastern traditions, particularly in Genesis, chapters 6–9.) *Deucalion and Pyrrha* (313–415) are the Greek Mr and Mrs Noah, two god-fearing and mutually devoted survivors. After the flood's effects are reversed, they miraculously produce a new race of hardy

men. The after-effects of the flood lead to the birth of strange new creatures, including the terrifying *Python* (416–50), who is killed by the god Apollo.

Apollo is the link with the first in a series of metamorphoses involving the amours of gods. The next story concerns the virginal nymph *Daphne* (451–567), who is relentlessly pursued by Apollo but finally eludes capture by being transformed into a laurel tree. The lighter tone and pace of this contrast vividly with the earlier part of the book.

A noble description of the Vale of Tempe provides an ingenious transition to the parallel story of Jupiter's successful pursuit of *Io* (568–686, 713–47), whom the god transforms to a cow to protect her from Juno's jealousy. Here we can see an element of comedy in the relationship between the gods, as well as of touching pathos in Ovid's account of Io's unhappy predicament. Here too we have the first inserted story, told by Mercury to Io's hundred-eyed sentinel, Argus, of *Pan and Syrinx* (687–712), another instance of a nymph pursued by a god and metamorphosed at the last minute.

The book concludes with an introduction to the story of *Phaëthon* (748–79), which is to occupy a large part of Book 2. When the young man's claim to be the child of the sun god is questioned, he is determined to establish the truth and sets out to find his father. The closing lines ring with excited anticipation.

PROLOGUE*

Changes of shape, new forms, are the theme which my spirit impels me
now to recite. Inspire me, O gods (it is you who have even
transformed my art*), and spin me a thread from the world's beginning
down to my own lifetime, in one continuous poem.

THE CREATION

Before the earth and the sea and the all-encompassing heaven
came into being, the whole of nature displayed but a single
face, which men have called Chaos: a crude, unstructured mass,
nothing but weight without motion, a general conglomeration
of matter composed of disparate, incompatible elements.
No Titan the sun god was present to cast his rays on the universe,
nor Phoebe the moon to replenish her horns and grow to her fullness;
no earth suspended in equilibrium, wrapped in its folding
mantle of air; nor Amphitríte, the goddess of ocean,
to stretch her sinuous arms all round the earth's long coastline.
Although the land and the sea and the sky were involved in the great mass,
no one could stand on the land or swim in the waves of the sea,
and the sky had no light. None of the elements kept its shape,
and all were in conflict inside one body: the cold with the hot,

the wet with the dry, the soft with the hard, and weight
with the weightless.
The god who is nature* was kinder and brought this
dispute to a settlement.
He severed the earth from the sky and he parted the sea
from the land;
he separated translucent space from the cloudier
atmosphere.
He disentangled the elements,* so as to set them free
from the heap of darkness, then gave them their
separate places and tied them
down in a peaceful concordat: fire flashed out as a
weightless
force in the vaulted heaven and found its rightful place
at the height of the firmament; air came next in position
and lightness;
earth was denser than these, attracted the larger
particles
and sank through the downward thrust of its weight; in
the nether region
came water, confining the solid disc in its liquid
embrace.
When the god, whichever one of the gods, had
divided the substance
of Chaos and ordered it thus in its different constituent
members,
first, in order that earth should hang suspended in
perfect
symmetrical balance, he moulded it into the shape of a
great sphere.
Next he commanded the seas to scatter and swell as
they fronted
the blast of the winds, surrounding the earth with its
circle of shore.
To the ocean he added the springs, huge standing pools
and the lakes,
and rivers to wind downstream as their sloping banks
confined them.

These in their various places may be absorbed by the earth itself,
or travel as far as the sea, where they enter the broad expanse
of more open water and beat on the shore instead of their banks.
Then he commanded the plains to extend and the valleys to sink,
the woods to be decked in their leaves and the rock-faced mountains to soar.
And just as the sky is cut into zones, with two to northward,
two to the south and a fifth which burns with more heat than the others,
so with the earth which the sky encloses: the god in his wisdom
ordained five separate zones* or tracts to be traced on its surface.
The central zone is too hot for men to inhabit the region;
two are buried in snow; but two he placed in between,
and thus he blended the heat with the cold in a temperate climate.
Hanging over the lands is the air, whose weight exceeds
that of fire by as much as the weight of earth exceeds that of water.
It was here that the god commanded the mists and the clouds to settle,
here that he posted the thunder to trouble the hearts of men,
with the winds which cause the lightning that burns and the lightning that flashes.*
Still the creator did not allow the winds dominion
over the whole wide range of air. As it is, they can scarcely
be stopped from tearing the world to pieces, though each of them governs
his blasts in a distant quarter; so angrily brothers can quarrel.

Eurus' retreat is the home of the dawn, from the realms of Arabia
and Persia through to the mountains* that gleam in the morning sunlight;
Zephyr is close to the evening and fans the shores that are warmed
by the setting sun. Bóreas, lord of the blizzard, sweeps
into Scýthia, land of the frozen north; while Auster, opposite,
drenches the soil of the south with his clouds of incessant rain.
Above the turbulent lower air the creator imposed
the weightless translucent ether, untainted by earthly pollution.
Nature had hardly been settled within its separate compartments
when stars, which had long been hidden inside the welter of Chaos,
began to explode with light all over the vault of the heavens.
And lest any part of the world should be wanting its own living creatures,
the floor of heaven was richly inlaid with the stars and the planets,
the waves of the sea were assigned as the realm of the glinting fishes,
the earth was the home of the beasts, and the yielding air of the birds.
Yet a holier living creature, more able to think high thoughts,
which could hold dominion over the rest, was still to be found.
So Man came into the world. Maybe the great artificer
made him of seed divine in a plan for a better universe.
Maybe the earth that was freshly formed and newly divorced
from the heavenly ether retained some seeds of its kindred element –

earth, which Prométheus, the son of Iápetus, sprinkled with raindrops
and moulded into the likeness of gods who govern the universe.
Where other animals walk on all fours and look to the ground,
man was given a towering head and commanded to stand
erect, with his face uplifted to gaze on the stars of heaven.
Thus clay, so lately no more than a crude and formless substance,
was metamorphosed to assume the strange new figure of Man.

THE FOUR AGES

First to be born was the Golden Age. Of its own free will,
without laws or enforcement, it did what was right and trust prevailed.
Punishment held no terrors; no threatening edicts were published
in tablets of bronze; secure with none to defend them, the crowd
never pleaded or cowered in fear in front of their stern-faced judges.
No pine tree had yet been felled from its home on the mountains and come down
into the flowing waves for journeys to lands afar;
mortals were careful and never forsook the shores of their homeland.
No cities were yet ringed round with deep, precipitous earthworks;
long straight trumpets and curved bronze horns never summoned to battle;
swords were not carried nor helmets worn; no need for armies,
but nations were free to practise the gentle arts of peace.

The earth was equally free and at rest, untouched by the hoe,
unscathed by the ploughshare, supplying all needs from its natural resources.
Content to enjoy the food that required no painful producing,
men simply gathered arbutus fruit and mountain strawberries,
cornel cherries and blackberries plucked from the prickly bramble,
acorns too which they found at the foot of the spreading oak tree.
Spring was the only season. Flowers which had never been planted
were kissed into life by the warming breath of the gentle zephyrs;
and soon the earth, untilled by the plough, was yielding her fruits,
and without renewal the fields grew white with the swelling corn blades.
Rivers of milk and rivers of nectar flowed in abundance,
and yellow honey, distilled like dew from the leaves of the ilex.
When Saturn* was cast into murky Tártarus, Jupiter seized
the throne of the universe. Now there followed the age of silver,
meaner than gold but higher in value than tawny bronze.
Gentle spring was no longer allowed to continue unbroken;
the king of the gods divided the year into four new seasons:
summer, changeable autumn, winter and only a short spring.
The sky for the first time burned and glowed with a dry white heat,

and the blasts of the wild winds froze the rain into hanging
icicles.
People now took shelter in houses; their homes hitherto
had been caves, dense thickets or brushwood fastened
together with bark.
For the first time also the corn was sown in long ploughed
furrows,
and oxen groaned beneath the weight of the heavy yoke.
A third age followed the Silver Age, the bronze
generation,
crueller by nature, more ready to take up menacing
weapons,
but still not vile to the core. The final age was of iron;
the floodgates opened and all the forces of evil invaded
a breed of inferior mettle. Loyalty, truth and conscience
went into exile, their throne usurped by guile and
deception,
treacherous plots, brute force and a criminal lust for
possession.
Sailors spread their sails to the winds they had tempted so
rarely
before, and the keels of pine that had formerly stood stock
still
on the mountain slopes presumptuously bobbed in the alien
ocean.
The land which had been as common to all as the air or the
sunlight
was now marked out with the boundary lines of the wary
surveyor.
The affluent earth was not only pressed for the crops and
the food
that it owed; men also found their way to its very bowels,
and the wealth which the god had hidden away in the home
of the ghosts
by the Styx was mined and dug out, as a further incitement
to wickedness.
Now dangerous iron, and gold – more dangerous even than
iron –

had emerged. Grim War appeared, who uses both in his battles,
and brandished his clashing weapons in hands bespattered with slaughter.
Men throve on their thefts: no guest was safe from his host, no father
secure with his daughter's husband; love between brothers was found
but seldom. Men and their wives would long for each other's demise;
wicked stepmothers brewed their potions of deadly wolfsbane;
sons would cast their fathers' horoscopes prematurely.
All duty to gods and to men lay vanquished; and Justice the Maiden*
was last of the heavenly throng to abandon the blood-drenched earth.

THE GIANTS

The upper air was not to be left in greater peace
than the earth below. The story goes that the giants* aspired
to the throne of heaven and built a path to the stars on high,
by piling mountain on mountain. Then it was that almighty
Jupiter launched his lightning bolts to shatter Olympus,
and shook Mount Pélion down from its base on the ridges of Ossa.
When, crushed by the mass they had raised, those fearsome bodies lay prostrate,
Mother Earth, as the story continues, now steeped and drenched
in the blood of her offspring, gave fresh life to the seething liquid.

Unwilling that all the fruits of her womb should be lost and forgotten,
she turned their blood into human form; but the new race also
looked on the gods with contempt. Their passionate lust for ferocious
violence and slaughter prevailed. You'd have known they were born of blood.

LYCAÖN

When Jupiter, son of Saturn, looked down from the heights of heaven,
he sighed, and remembered the gruesome banquet* served at Lycáön's
table, a recent event and not yet publicly rumoured.
Mightily angry, as only Jove can be angry, he called
a general assembly and all responded at once to his summons.
In cloudless skies you can clearly see a path in the heavens;
men call it the Milky Way, well known for its brilliant whiteness.
This is the road which the gods must take to the mighty Thunderer's
royal palace. The well-thronged halls to the right and the left,
with their doors flung open, belong to the gods of the highest rank.
The common divinities live outside; right here the élite
and heavenly powers that be have established their hearths and homes.
And this is the place which, if I could muster the boldness to say it,
I'd not be afraid to describe as the Pálatine Hill* of the firmament.

After the gods had taken their seats in the marble chamber,
Jove, enthroned on a dais and clutching his ivory sceptre,
shook the awesome locks of his head three times and again,
so causing the earth and the sea and the constellations to tremble,
then opened his lips to give vent to his wrath in the following manner:
'The fear that I feel today for the sovereign power of the universe
equals my fear when each of the snake-footed giants was striving
to lay his hundred hands on the sky and make it his own.
Fierce as that enemy was, its impetus sprang from a single
body and source. But now I am forced to commit the whole race
of mankind to destruction wherever the ocean roars on the shore.
By the streams of the Stygian river below I swear I shall do it!
Let other cures be attempted first, but what is past remedy
calls for the surgeon's knife, lest the parts that are sound be infected.
I have my demigods, all those powers of the countryside: nymphs,
and fauns and satyrs, my woodland spirits who dwell on the mountains.
These we have not yet chosen to welcome to heavenly honours,
but let us allow them at least to dwell on the earth we have given them.
Or do your honours believe their safety is firmly assured,

when I, who am lord of the lightning and master of all you
gods,
am the object of plots hatched up by that infamous savage,
Lycaön?'
The house was in uproar; passions blazed as they called
for the blood
of the reckless traitor; as, when that band of disloyal
malcontents
raged to extinguish the name of Rome by murdering
Caesar,*
all mankind was suddenly struck by a terrible fear
of grievous disaster to come and the whole world shuddered
in horror.
And just as your people's loyal devotion is welcome to you,
Augustus,* so was his subjects' to Jove. A word and a
gesture
sufficed to control the murmuring hubbub and all were
silent.
Then Jupiter broke the silence again to make his
pronouncement:
'Lycaön has paid for his crimes, so far you may rest
assured;
but let me describe his offence and the punishment meted
out.
An evil report of the times had come to my ears. Desirous
of proving it false, I made my descent from the heights of
Olympus
and wandered over the earth, a god disguised as a mortal.
It would take too long to recount the story of all the
wickedness
I discovered. The truth was worse than rumour reported.
Crossing over the high Arcadian mountains (Maénalus,
home of wild beasts, Cylléne, and cold pine-covered
Lycaéus),
I entered the palace of King Lycaön and ventured beneath
his inhospitable roof in the twilight hour of the nightfall.
I gave a sign that a god had come, and the common people

turned to their prayers. Lycaön began by mocking their piety;
then he said, "Is it a god or a mortal? I'll settle the matter
by using a simple test. There will be no doubt where the truth lies."
His plan was to make a sudden attack in the night on my sleeping
body and kill me. This was his chosen method of proving
the truth. Not content with that, he applied his sword to the throat
of a hostage sent from Epírus and under my own protection;
and while the man's flesh still held some warmth, he roasted part of it
over the fire and poached the remainder in boiling water,
then set this repast on the table. My moment now had arrived.
My lightning of vengeance struck, and the palace collapsed in ruins
on top of the household gods* who shared the guilt of the master.
Frightened out of his wits, Lycaön fled to the country
where all was quiet. He tried to speak, but his voice broke into
an echoing howl. His ravening soul infected his jaws;
his murderous longings were turned on the cattle; he still was possessed
by bloodlust. His garments were changed to a shaggy coat and his arms
into legs. He was now transformed to a wolf. But he kept some signs
of his former self: the grizzled hair and the wild expression,
the blazing eyes and the bestial image remained unaltered.

One house has fallen, but more than one has deserved to perish.
The demon of madness is holding dominion the wide world over;
you'd think that the human race had joined in an evil conspiracy.
This is my sentence: let all of them speedily pay for their crimes!'
Jove had spoken. Some fuelled his anger further by cheering
loudly, while others simply expressed their approval by clapping.
But still a murmur went round: 'The loss of the human race
will be widely deplored! And what will a world bereft of mortals
be like in the future? Who will bring to our altars the offerings
of incense? Is earth to be left to the mercies of ravaging wild beasts?'
Such were their questions; but Jupiter told them not to be anxious.
He would take care of the future, he said; and he promised to breed
a new race of miraculous birth, unlike the people before it.

THE FLOOD

The god was now on the point of launching his bolts on the whole wide
earth, but he feared that the conflagration might cause the holy
ether* to catch fire too in a blaze from pole to pole.
He also remembered the Fates' decree, that a time would arrive*
when the sea and the land and the royal palace of heaven would burst

into flames and the complex mass of the universe come to grief.
So he put the lightning, forged in the Cyclops' workshop, aside
and chose a different method of punishing mortals, by massing
his storm-clouds over the sky and destroying the race in a great flood.
All of the gales which scatter the gathering clouds, and among them
the north wind Áquilo, Jupiter promptly imprisoned inside
the caverns of Aéolus. Notus, the wind of the south, he released.
Notus flew out on his soaking wings, his terrible visage
covered in pitchy gloom; his beard was a bundle of rain-storms;
water streamed from his hoary locks; his forehead a cushion
for mists; his wings and the folds of his garments were sodden and dripping.
He squeezed the bank of menacing clouds like a sponge, and a thunderclap
followed. Instantly rain poured down from the sky in torrents.
Juno's messenger, decked in her mantle of many colours,
Iris the rainbow, sucked up moisture to thicken the clouds.
The corn was flattened; the farmer wept for his wasted prayers;
and all the fruits of a long year's labour were gone to no purpose.
Jupiter's anger did not stop short in the sky, his own kingdom;
Neptune the sea god deployed his waters to aid his brother.

He summoned the rivers and, when they'd arrived at their
master's palace,
he spoke to the meeting: 'No need for a lengthy harangue,'
he said;
'Pour forth in the strength that is yours – it is needed! Open
the floodgates,
down with the barriers, give full rein to the steeds of your
streams!'
He had spoken. The rivers returned to relax the curbs on
their sources,
and then rolled down to the ocean flats in unbridled
career.
Neptune himself now struck the earth with his trident. It
trembled
under the blow, and a raging torrent gushed from the
chasm.
Bursting their confines, the rivers engulfed the plains and
the valleys.
The orchards along with the crops, and the cattle along
with the people,
houses and shrines with their sacred possessions were swept
to oblivion.
Dwellings, which stood their ground and were able to face
such an onslaught
untoppled, were still submerged from above by an
overwhelming,
mountainous wave, which levelled their pinnacles deep in
the floodtide.
And now no more could the land and the sea be clearly
distinguished.
The world was reduced to an ocean, an ocean without any
coastline.
Look at the man on that hill, or sitting alone in his
fishing-boat,
rowing across the fields where he recently guided his
ploughshare.
Another is sailing above his cornfields or over the roof

of his vanished farmhouse, or casting his line in the top
of an elm tree.
He might have dropped anchor to catch in the soil of a
grassy meadow,
or else his dinghy is scraping the vineyard trellis below
him.
There in the field where the slender goats were lately
browsing
on tufts of grass, the seals are resting their clumsy bodies.
Under water the Néreïds gaze in utter amazement
at coppices, cities and buildings. The woods are
invaded by dolphins,
blundering into the branches and bumping the trunks
till they shake them.
Wolves are swimming among the sheep; tawny lions
and tigers are swept along in the flood; no use to the
boar
is his lightning strength, nor the speed of his legs to the
floundering stag.
At the end of a tedious search for land and a resting
place,
with wings exhausted the wandering bird flutters down
to the waves.
Small hills are completely submerged by the sea in its
limitless freedom,
and billows are strangely beating against the peaks of
the mountains.
All but a few have been drowned in the flood, and any
survivors
for shortage of food are destroyed by long-drawn-out
starvation.

DEUCALION AND PYRRHA

Phocis lies in the country between Boeótia and Thessaly,
fertile land, when still it was land. At the time of the flood
it was part of the sea and a plain of suddenly spreading
water.
Here you can visit a twin-peaked mountain, called
Parnássus,
towering up to the stars and hiding its head in the clouds.
This was the only feature the ocean had left uncovered;
and here Deucálion, sailing a tiny boat with his wife,
ran aground. On landing they paid the homage due to the
nymphs
of the great Corýcian cave, to the mountain spirits and
Themis,
goddess of prophecy, then in control of the Delphic oracle.
You'd never find a better or more right-minded man
than Deucalion, neither a more god-fearing woman than
Pyrrha.
When Jupiter saw that the world was a pool of swirling
water,
that only one was left of so many thousand men,
and only one was left of so many thousand women,
both of them guiltless of sin and both devout in their
worship,
he scattered the mists; with the north wind's help he
banished the storm-clouds,
Exposing the earth once more to the sky and the sky to the
earth.
Neptune's anger subsided as well. Laying his trident
aside, he calmed the turbulent waters and called upon
Triton,
the sea-green merman, who heaved his shoulders, encrusted
by nature
with shells of the murex,* above the surface, with orders to
blow

on his resonant conch and signal the rivers and waves to withdraw.
Triton lifted his hollow horn, which wreathes in a spiral
up from its mouthpiece to broaden out to a bell, the horn
whose notes, when once he has filled it with breath in the midst of the deep,
rebound on the echoing shoreline from east to west. So then,
when the god had raised his instrument up to his lips, with the salt drops
streaming down from his beard, and the blast had sounded the bidden
retreat, it was heard by all the water of land and ocean;
and all the waters by which it was heard were held in check.
The sea recovered its shores; the rivers, though full, were confined
to their channels; the flooding receded; the hills were seen to emerge.
The earth rose up; as the waves died down, dry land expanded.
At the end of a long, long day the tops of the trees in the forest
began to appear, their leaves still thick with a coating of slime.

The world was restored; but when Deucalion saw it was empty
and felt the silence brooding over the desolate earth,
he burst into tears and said to Pyrrha, his dear companion:
'My cousin, my wife, the only woman who still survives,
first we were tied by our kindred blood, and then by our marriage;

now our very danger unites us. Here is the world
with its glorious lands from east to west; and here are we,
an inglorious crowd of two. All else belongs to the sea.
As yet, indeed, we can hardly be certain the life that we have
is safely assured. These clouds still fill me with fear and foreboding.
How would you now be feeling, my poor dear love, if I
had been lost and you had been snatched from death? How could you have suffered
fear on your own, with no one there to comfort your sorrow?
Believe me, if you were lying beneath the waves, my beloved,
I should follow you there to be drowned in the waves beside you.
I wish I could use my father Prometheus' skill to create
mankind once again and breathe new life into moulded clay!
Today we two are all that is left of the human race.
That is the will of the gods. We survive as nothing but relicts.'
He spoke and they wept. They then decided to pray to the heavenly
power of Themis and crave her help in a sacred oracle.
Speedily, side by side, they made their way to Cephísus;*
the river was still disturbed but cutting its usual channel.
Drawing some water, they sprinkled it over their heads and their garments,
and bent their footsteps towards the shrine of the holy goddess.
Its gable was pale with unsightly moss, and the fires on the altar
were dead. When they reached the temple steps, they both prostrated
themselves and fearfully pressed their lips on the cold, hard pavement,

saying aloud: 'If the prayers of the righteous can soften the hearts
of the gods and win them over, transforming their anger to kindness,
gentle Themis, declare to us how to repair the loss
of our wretched race, and come to the aid of our deluged world.'
The heart of the goddess was moved and she gave her response to them, saying:
'Leave this sanctuary, cover your heads and ungirdle your garments,
then cast the bones of your mighty mother behind your backs.'
They were long dumbfounded. Pyrrha was first to break the silence
and voice her protest aloud. She refused to obey the goddess'
commands. With trembling lips she begged for pardon, too frightened
to give such offence to her mother's ghost by casting her dead bones.
Meanwhile they silently pondered the words of the puzzling reply
which had come from the oracle's dark recess, and discussed them together.
Prometheus' son then gently suggested, to calm Epimétheus'*
daughter: 'Unless my wits are awry and sorely deceiving me,
oracles must be holy and never command what is sinful.
Our mighty mother is Earth. I believe what is meant by her bones
are stones on her body, and these we are bidden to cast behind us.'
Though Pyrrha was much impressed by her husband's interpretation,

her hopes still wavered. They both distrusted the oracle's bidding,
but saw little harm in trying. Proceeding down from the temple,
they covered their heads, ungirdled their robes and, stepping out boldly,
scattered some stones behind their backs, as the oracle ordered.
Who would believe what ensued, if it wasn't confirmed by tradition?
The stones started to lose their essential hardness, slowly
to soften, and then to assume a new shape. They soon grew larger
and gathered a nature more gentle than stone. An outline of human
form could be seen, not perfectly clear, like a rough-hewn statue
partially carved from the marble and not yet properly finished.
But still, the part of the stones which consisted of earth and contained
some moisture was turned into flesh; the solid, inflexible matter
was changed into bones; and the veins of the rock into veins of blood.
In a moment of time, by the will of the gods, the stones that were thrown
from the hands of a man were transformed to take on the appearance of men,
and women were fashioned anew from those that were thrown by a woman.
And so our race is a hard one; we work by the sweat of our brow,
and bear the unmistakable marks of our stony origin.

PYTHON

Other creatures after their various kinds came forth
from the earth by spontaneous self-generation. The lingering moisture
was warmed by the rays of the sun, and the heat made the mud in the water-logged
marshes swell and expand. The seeds of animal life
were fed in the mother's womb of life-giving soil which engendered them,
growing in course of time to the shapes of the different species.
Such we can see when the seven-mouthed Nile has withdrawn from the flood-drenched
fields and brought its waters back to their normal channels.
After the freshly deposited mud grows hot in the sunshine,
the farmers turning the clods with their ploughs discover a horde
of new creatures. Some have arrived on the threshold of life and can even
be watched at the moment of birth, while others are still half-formed
and without their limbs; it will sometimes appear in a single body
that one of its parts is alive and the rest is composed of mere earth.
When heat and moisture are blended, we know that they lead to conception;
everything owes its first beginning to these two elements.
Though fire is at war with water, their combination produces
the whole of nature – procreation from friendly enmity.*

So at the time straight after the flood, when the earth was muddy
and heated again from above by the rays of the sun, it produced
an infinite number of species. Some of the forms which emerged
were familiar before, but others were new and amazing creations.
Amongst these forms was an unknown serpent, the monstrous Python,
also brought forth by Earth at the time, though she cannot have wished for it.
Sprawling over Parnassus, it horribly frightened the new-born
peoples, until it was killed by the deadly shafts of Apollo,
whose only targets before were the timid gazelles and the roe deer.
The snake was transfixed by a thousand arrows (the quiver was almost
emptied) and out of its wounds there spewed black gushes of venom.
In order that time should never destroy the fame of this exploit,
Apollo established the sacred games, attended by huge crowds,
the Pythian Games,* called after the serpent he vanquished, Python.
Here the athletes who won their events on track or on field,
or the chariot-race, would receive the glorious crown of an oak-wreath.
The laurel had not yet appeared, and Phoebus would garland the flowing
locks of his comely head with any available foliage.

DAPHNE

Apollo's first love was Daphne, the child of the river Penéüs.
Blind chance was not to be blamed but Cupid's spiteful resentment.
Phoebus, still in the flush of his victory over the serpent,
had noticed the love-god bending his bow and drawing the string
to his shoulder, and asked him: 'What are you doing with grown-up weapons,
you mischievous boy? That bow would better be carried by me.
When I fire my shafts at my foes or beasts, they're unfailingly wounded.
My numberless arrows have just destroyed the venomous Python,
which filled whole acres of mountainside with its belly's infections.
You be content with your torch and use it to kindle some passion
or other; but don't usurp any honours belonging to me!'
The son of Venus replied: 'Your arrows, Apollo, can shoot
whatever you choose, but I'll shoot you. As mortal creatures
must yield to a god, your glory will likewise prove to be subject
to mine.' Then he beat his wings and cut a path through the atmosphere,
nimbly alighting upon the heights of shady Parnassus.
Once there he drew from his quiver two arrows of contrary purpose:
one is for rousing passion, the other is meant to repel it.

The former is made of gold, and its head has a sharp, bright point,
while the latter is blunt and weighted with lead one side of the reed shaft.
That was the arrow which Cupid implanted in Daphne's bosom;
the other was aimed at Apollo and smote to the core of his being.
Phoebus at once was filled with desire, but Daphne fled
from the very thought of a lover. She joyed in the forest lairs
and in spoils of captive beasts, like the virgin goddess Diana,
binding her carelessly flowing locks in a simple headband.
Courted by suitors in droves, Peneüs' daughter rejected them.
Stubbornly single, she'd roam through the woodland thickets, without
concern for the meaning of marriage or love or physical union.
Often her father remarked, 'You owe me a son, my daughter,'
or else he would say, 'Now when, my child, will you give me a grandson?'
Marriage torches to Daphne were nothing less than anathema.
Blushes of shame would spread all over her beautiful cheeks,
she would lovingly cling to her father's neck in a coaxing appeal
and say to him, 'Darling Father, I want to remain a virgin
for ever. Please let me. Diana's father allowed her that.'
Peneüs granted her wish; but Daphne's peculiar beauty
and personal charm were powerful bars to her prayer's fulfilment.
Phoebus caught sight of her, fell in love and longed to possess her.

Wishes were hopes, for even his powers of prophecy
failed him.
Think of the flimsy stubble which burns in a harvested
cornfield;
and think of a blazing hedgerow fired by a torch which a
traveller
has carelessly brought too close or dropped behind him
at daybreak.
So was the god as his heart caught fire and the flames
spread through
to the depths of his soul, and passion was fuelled with
empty hope.
He eyes the hair hanging loosely over her neck, and
murmurs,
'What if that hair were neatly arranged!' He looks at
her bright eyes
burning and twinkling like stars; he studies her lips, so
teasingly
tempting; he fondly admires her hands with their
delicate fingers;
he dotes on the shapely arms, so nearly bare to the
shoulder;
what's hidden he thinks must be even better. But swift
as the light breeze,
Daphne is gone, with never a pause as he calls out after
her:
'Stop, dear Daphne, I beg you to stop! This isn't an
enemy
chasing you. Stop! You would think I'm a wolf
pursuing a lamb,
a lion hunting a deer or an eagle pouncing on fluttering
doves in mid-air, but I'm not! It is love that impels me
to follow you.
Have pity! How frightened I am that you'll fall and
scratch those innocent
legs in the brambles. You mustn't be hurt on account
of me!

The ground where you're rushing away is so rough. Slow
down, my beloved,
I beg you. Don't run so fast and I promise to slow down
too.
Now ask who it is that desires you. I'm not a wild
mountain-dweller;
this isn't an uncouth shepherd, minding the flocks and the
herds
round here. Impetuous girl, you have no idea who you're
running from.
That's why you're running so fast. Listen! I am the master
of Delphi,
Claros and Ténedos, Pátara's temple too. My father
is Jupiter. I can reveal the past, the present and future
to all who seek them. I am the lord of the lyre and song.
My arrows are deadly, but one is even more deadly than
they are,
the shaft which has smitten a heart that has never been
wounded before.
Healing is my invention, the world invokes me as Helper,
and I am the one who dispenses the herbs with the power to
cure.
Alas! No herbs have the power to cure the disease of my
love.
Those arts which comfort the whole of mankind cannot
comfort their master!'
Apollo wanted to say much more, but the terrified
Daphne
ran all the faster; she left him behind with his speech
unfinished.
Her beauty was visible still, as her limbs were exposed by
the wind;
the breezes which blew in her face managed also to flutter
her dress;
and the currents of air succeeded in blowing her tresses
behind her.
Flight made her all the more lovely; but now the god in his
youthful

ardour was ready no longer to squander his breath on wheedling
pleas. Spurred on by desire, he followed the trail with new vigour.
Imagine a greyhound, imagine a hare it has sighted in open
country: one running to capture his prey, the other for safety.
The hound is about to close in with his jaws; he believes he is almost
there; he is grazing the back of her heels with the tip of his muzzle.
The hare isn't sure if her hunter has caught her, but leaps into freedom,
clear of the menacing jaws and the mouth which keeps brushing against her.
So with Apollo and Daphne, the one of them racing in hope
and the other in fear. But the god had the pinions of love to encourage him.
Faster than she, he allowed her no rest; his hands were now close
to the fugitive's shoulders; his breath was ruffling the hair on her neck.
Her strength exhausted, the girl grew pale; then overcome
by the effort of running, she saw Peneüs' waters before her:
'Help me, Father!' she pleaded. 'If rivers have power over nature,
mar the beauty which made me admired too well, by changing
my form!' She had hardly ended her prayer when a heavy numbness
came over her body; her soft white bosom was ringed in a layer
of bark, her hair was turned into foliage, her arms into branches.

The feet that had run so nimbly were sunk into sluggish roots;
her head was confined in a treetop; and all that remained was her beauty.
Tree though she was, Apollo still loved her. Caressing the trunk
with his hand, he could feel the heart still fluttering under the new bark.
Seizing the branches, as though they were limbs, in his arms' embrace,
he pressed his lips to the wood; but the wood still shrank from his kisses.
Phoebus then said to her: 'Since you cannot be mine in wedlock,
you must at least be Apollo's tree. It is you who will always
be twined in my hair, on my tuneful lyre and my quiver of arrows.
The generals of Rome shall be wreathed with you, when the jubilant paean
of triumph is raised and the long procession ascends the Capitol.
On either side of Augustus' gates your trees shall stand sentry,
faithfully guarding the crown of oak-leaves* hanging between them.
As I, with my hair that is never cut, am eternally youthful,
so you with your evergreen leaves are for glory and praise everlasting.'
Apollo the Healer had done. With a wave of her new-formed branches
the laurel agreed, and seemed to be nodding her head in the treetop.

IO (1)

Théssaly boasts a ravine called Tempe, enclosed on each side
by a rock face covered with trees; and down it the river Peneüs
pours and rolls on his foaming way from the foot of Mount Pindus.
Powerfully tumbling, the cataract leaps into clouds of a wandering,
wispy vapour; the spray besprinkles the trees on the clifftops
like showers of rain; and a constant roar is returned from the distance.
This is the dwelling, the mansion, the innermost shrine of the mighty
river-god; here he dispenses justice, enthroned in a cave
carved out of the rock, to all of his waters and nymphs of the waters.
Ṭhis was the gathering point of firstly the local rivers,
uncertain whether they ought to congratulate Daphne's father
or offer condolence: Sperchéüs whose banks are bordered with poplars,
restless Enípeus, ancient Apídanus, gentle Amphrýsus
and Aéas. These were shortly followed by other streams,
who wander lazily down to the sea as their currents impel them.
Only Ínachus* failed to appear; he was buried away
in the depths of his cavern, adding tears to his waters, in pitiful
grief for the loss of his daughter Io. He didn't know whether
she still was alive or had gone to the shades; but as she was nowhere

at all to be found, he feared the worst and believed she had vanished.
What happened? As Io was one day coming away from her father's
river, Jupiter saw her and cried, 'You beautiful maiden,
worthy of Jove, how happy the husband who makes you his own!
You should rest in the depths of these shady woods,' and he pointed them out,
'while the sun is so high in the sky, at its zenith, and burning so fiercely.
If you are afraid to enter the wild beasts' lairs on your own,
you'll be safe with a god to guide you into the forest's secret
recesses – no ordinary god, but I who wield in my mighty
hand the sceptre of heaven and hurl the volatile lightning.'
She started to flee. 'Don't run from me now!' Already she'd left
the pastures of Lerna and woody Lyrcéan country behind her,
when Jupiter, throwing a mantle of darkness over the wide earth,
halted the flight of the runaway nymph and stealthily raped her.

Meanwhile Queen Juno directed her gaze on the middle of Argos.
The day had been bright and sunny, but now to her great surprise
the clouds had suddenly turned it to night. The mist didn't come
from the river, she saw; and it couldn't be due to the earth's own moisture.
Where was her husband? She looked all round. She was quite familiar
with Jupiter's amorous tricks, as she'd caught him straying so often.

As soon as she failed to find him in heaven, her instant reaction was,
'Either I'm wrong, or I'm wronged!' and, gliding down through the air,
she alighted on earth and commanded the mists to remove themselves.
The god, however, anticipating his consort's arrival,
had changed the daughter of Inachus into a snow-white heifer.
Even so she was perfectly lovely; Saturnian Juno,
much as it galled her, was forced to admire the beautiful creature.
'Whose is it? Whence does it come? What herd?' she enquired in pretended
ignorance. 'Born of the earth,' lied Jupiter, hoping to silence
her searching questions. Juno then asked him, 'Please will you give her
to me as a present?' What was he to do? To surrender his love
would be cruelly painful, but not to give her would look suspicious.
Conscience would argue for her surrender; his love was against it.
Love indeed would have won the battle; but if he refused
the paltry gift of a cow to the wife who was also his sister,
it could have appeared that the creature was not exactly a heifer.
Juno's rival was now in her power, but her fears continued
to haunt her. She still suspected Jove and his treacherous wiles,
until she put Argus, the son of Aréstor, in charge of Io.
Argus' head had a hundred eyes, which rested in relays,
two at a time, while the others kept watch and remained on duty.

Whichever way he was standing, his eyes were always on Io;
even behind his back, she could never escape from his watchful
stare. She could graze in the daytime, but after sundown he'd pen her
inside an enclosure and tie her innocent neck with a halter.
Her food was tree leaves and bitter herbs; her bedding was earth,
not always too grassy; her water came from the muddy streams.
When Io wanted to supplicate Argus with outstretched arms,
no arms were there to outstretch. When she opened her mouth to complain,
her own voice startled her; all that emerged was a hideous lowing.
She came to the banks where so often she'd played, the banks of her father
Inachus. Here when she looked in the water and saw her reflected
head with its strange new horns, she recoiled from herself in a panic.
The naiads had no idea who she was, and even Inachus
failed to know her; but still she followed her father and sisters
quickly along, and allowed them to pat her back and admire her.
Inachus plucked some grass and tenderly held it out to her.
Licking and kissing her father's hands, she couldn't help weeping.
If only words could have followed her tears, she'd have begged him for help;
she'd have told him her name and described her plight. Two letters* were all
that could serve for words, two letters traced by a hoof in the dust,
which revealed her name and the sorry tale of her transformation.

'Woe and alas!' old Inachus cried, as he tenderly fondled
the horns and clung to the snowy neck of the moaning heifer.
'Woe and alas!' he repeated. 'Are you the daughter I searched for
over the whole wide world? My sorrow was not so heavy
when I was unable to find you. You're silent and cannot reply
to my questions. You only respond with a deep, deep sigh from your heart.
When I speak to you, all you can offer me back is a melancholy low.
Blind to the future, I busied myself with plans for your wedding,
in hope to gain a new son and soon to become a grandfather.
Now your husband and children must come from a herd of cattle.
If only death could allow me to end this terrible sorrow!
Sadly I have to remain a god and the gates of Hades
are barred to me. Grief must be my companion for ever and ever.'
So the father lamented, but star-eyed Argus discreetly
eased him aside and led the daughter away to more distant
pastures. There he transferred himself to the heights of a mountain
summit, from where he could sit and keep watch in every direction.

The king of the gods could no longer endure his beloved Io's
pain and distress. He summoned his son, whom Maia the radiant
Pleiad had borne, and gave him his orders to murder Argus.
Mercury only paused to don his winged sandals, cover

his head, and seize the sleep-giving wand which empowers
his hand.
Thus attired, the offspring of Jupiter leapt from his father's
citadel
down to the earth; once there he discarded his
wide-brimmed hat,
took off his sandals and simply clung to his snake-twined
staff,
which he used in herdsman's fashion to drive the goats he
had rustled
along his way through the scrubland, playing the while on
his reed pipe.
Juno's guard was entranced by the unfamiliar music.
'You there, whoever you are,' said Argus, 'do come over
and sit with me here on this rock. You'll find no richer
abundance
of grass for your goats, and you see there's plenty of shade
for a herdsman.'
Mercury then sat down and filled the lingering hours
with desultory chat. He attempted to conquer those
watchful eyes
with the drone of his panpipes; but Argus fought to resist
sleep's soft
seduction. While some of his hundred eyes were allowed to
surrender,
others were kept awake. The pipe had been newly invented,
so Argus drowsily asked his companion about its invention.

INTERLUDE: PAN AND SYRINX

The god then told him a tale: 'In the cold Arcadian
mountains,
among the Nonácrian wood-nymphs, there lived a
remarkable naiad
(Syrinx her sisters called her), whom all admired for her
beauty.

More than once she'd eluded pursuit by lascivious satyrs
and all the various gods who dwell in the shadowy forests
and fertile fields. She modelled herself on the goddess Diana
in daily life and by staying chaste. When she dressed as a huntress,
you might have been taken in and supposed she was Leto's daughter,
but for her bow, which was made of horn, where Diana's is gold.
Despite it, she passed for Diana. One day she was spotted returning
from Mount Lycaeus by Pan. Bedecked with a garland of sharp
pine needles, he spoke to her, saying –' but Mercury broke off there,
and didn't describe how the nymph rejected the god's advances
and fled through the fields, until she arrived at the river Ladon
peacefully flowing between its sandy banks. Since the waters
were barring her way, she called on the nymphs of the stream to transform her.
So just at the moment when Pan believed that his Syrinx was caught,
instead of a fair nymph's body, he found himself clutching some marsh reeds.
But while he was sighing in disappointment, the movement of air
in the rustling reeds awakened a thin, low, plaintive sound.
Enthralled by the strange new music and sweetness of tone, Pan exclaimed,
'This sylvan pipe will enable us always to talk together!'

And so, when he'd bound some reeds of unequal length with a coating
of wax, a syrinx – the name of his loved one – stayed in his hands.

IO (2)

That was the story the god of Cyllene was going to tell,
when he saw that his enemy's drowsy eyes had all succumbed
and were shrouded in sleep. At once he stopped talking and stroked the sentry's
drooping lids with his magic wand to make sure he was out.
Then he rapidly struck with his sickle-shaped sword at his nodding victim
just where the head comes close to the neck, and hurled him bleeding
down from the rock to bespatter the cliff in a shower of gore.
Argus was finished. The light that had glittered in all those stars
was extinguished; a hundred eyes were eclipsed in a single darkness.
Juno extracted those eyes and gave them a setting like sparkling
jewels in the feathers displayed on the tail of the peacock, her own bird.
Blazing with anger, she wasted no time in venting her fury
by sending a horrible demon to frighten the eyes of Io
by day, and her mind at night. A goading terror was planted
deep in her heart, which hounded her over the world in flight.
At the end of the road was the Nile, where the tale of her toils was concluded.

As soon as she reached it, she sank to her knees by the bank of the river,
looked up with her neck thrown back and, lacking the arms to lift up
in prayer, uplifted her face to the stars. The groans that she uttered,
the tears that she shed and her piteous lowings, seemed to be challenging
Jupiter, pleading with him to grant her an end to her sufferings.
Jupiter then drew Juno gently into his arms
and asked her to punish Io no more: 'You may banish your fears
for the future,' he said; 'she will never provide you with cause for vexation
again,' and he called on the Stygian marshes to witness his promise.
Once the goddess had been placated, Io recovered
her human face and her body, the horns shrank down, the cow eyes narrowed,
the gaping mouth grew smaller, the shoulders and hands came back,
the hooves dissolved and faded away into five smooth toenails.
All that survived of the snow-white cow was its glowing beauty.
Happy once more to be standing on two feet only, the fair nymph
rose from the ground; but frightened to speak, in case she still lowed
like a heifer, she nervously tried a few words in her long-lost language.
Attended by linen-clad priests, she is worshipped today as a goddess.*

PHAËTHON (1)

Finally, Io gave birth to a son, called Épaphus, thought
to be sprung from mighty Jupiter's seed; and throughout the cities
his temple is linked with his mother's. One of his peers and rivals
was Pháëthon, child of the sun god. On one occasion, Epaphus
took exception to Phaëthon's boastful talking, his failure
to show him respect and his arrogant pride in his father, Phoebus.
'Ridiculous booby,' he sneered, 'to believe every word that your mother
tells you. The picture you have of your father is false and inflated!'
Phaëthon's face grew red, but shame put a brake on his anger;
he went and reported Epaphus' gibes to his mother, Clýmene.
'To distress you further, dear mother,' he added, 'I, Phaëthon, known
as so open and savage-tempered, said nothing. I'm deeply ashamed
that these scandalous taunts should be thrown at our heads and I couldn't refute them.
Mother, if I am truly the son of a god, please give me
a sign of my glorious birth and establish my title in heaven!'
After he'd spoken, he threw his arms round his mother's neck,
imploring her, if she valued the life of himself and her husband
Mérops, and if she hoped that his sisters would happily marry,
to offer him positive proof that his father was really the sun god.

We cannot be sure whether Phaëthon's prayers or
765 Clymene's anger
at what was imputed against herself affected her more;
but she raised both arms to the sky and her eyes to the
sun's bright beams,
to protest: 'By yonder resplendent orb with his
glistening rays,
who hears and surveys us all, my child, I swear to you
now
that the sun you gaze on in wonder, the sun which
770 governs the whole world,
is truly your father. If I speak false, may he ever refuse
me
his light, and may this day be the last when my eyes
shall behold him!
Small effort is needed to find your way to your father's
hearth.
The domain from where he arises begins where our
own land ends.
If your spirit impels you,* be off on your way and
775 question the sun god
himself!' As soon as his mother had finished speaking,
Phaëthon
darted out in excitement. The sky was already his own!
Crossing his native Ethiopia and India, nearing
the land of the sun, he hastened east to discover his
father.

BOOK 2

The story of *Phaëthon* (1–400) is continued in the grand opening description of the Sun's palace, which sets the tone for the tale of the young man's request to drive his father's chariot for a day, followed by its disastrous consequences. This is the longest single story in the whole poem, a mini-epic in its own right, with much to be admired for its dramatic quality and descriptive detail. The account of the burning earth balances the flood narrative in Book 1. We may also enjoy Ovid's descriptions of the various constellations and signs of the zodiac, together with his resonant 'catalogues' of mountains, springs and rivers. The actual metamorphosis, when it comes, is not of Phaëthon himself but of his sisters the Heliades, who change into poplars dropping amber tears, and of his friend Cycnus, who is transformed into a swan – the first of many metamorphoses into birds. Here we can note a marked change of tone which gradually leads Ovid's audience on to the more frivolous character of the stories in the rest of the book. The concluding section in which the sun god threatens to go on strike is undoubtedly comic.

We return to Jupiter inspecting the earth after the fire caused by Phaëthon. This leads the god into another amorous adventure with *Callisto* (401–530), and to his impersonating the virgin goddess Diana. Juno's inevitable jealousy results in the nymph's metamorphosis into a bear; but Callisto and her son Arcas, much to the goddess's indignation, are later transformed into a constellation.

An artificial transition leads to a group of stories about tell-tales who all get their come-uppance in various ways. In *The Raven and the Crow* (531–632) we have two interwoven stories,

with a third about the Daughters of Cecrops inserted inside the second. The thread of the gods' amours continues in Apollo's love for Coronis and in the rape by Neptune of the Phocian princess who was changed by Minerva to the crow.

Less amusingly, Chiron the Centaur's daughter, *Ocyrhoë* (633–75), apparently incurs the wrath of the gods in her prophetic revelations about the infant Aesculapius and is metamorphosed into a mare. In lighter vein again, *Battus* (676–707) is an old self-serving chatterer who reports Mercury to the god himself in disguise and is punished by transformation to the 'informing' rock which supplies the touchstone.

Mercury is the link with the next story, in which we re-encounter the daughters of Cecrops who briefly featured earlier on (552–61). To gain the love of Herse, Mercury tries to engage the help of her avaricious sister *Aglauros* (708–832). The goddess Minerva punishes Aglauros' greed by infecting her with the demon Envy, whose sombre description is another great passage to be looked out for and enjoyed. The outcome is another metamorphosis into a rock.

We return to Jupiter on a more light-hearted note for the concluding tale of his transformation to a bull for the purpose of abducting the Tyrian princess *Europa* (833–75). The book ends in a memorably erotic sequence, with an entrancing image of the frightened girl in the last three lines.

PHAËTHON (2)

Picture the Sun's royal seat, an imposing building with towering
columns, resplendent in glittering gold and blazing bronze;
its pediment proudly surmounted by figures in burnished ivory;
the double doors at the entrance a sheen of shimmering silver.
More wonderful yet is the workmanship which Vulcan displayed
on the portals' reliefs: the ocean encircling the central earth
on a detailed map of the world, with the Sun's great canopy over it.
There in the waves are the sea-gods:* Triton holding his conch-horn,
Próteus who constantly changes his shape, and the giant Aegaéon,
gripping the monstrous backs of the whales with his hundred arms;
Doris along with her daughters, some of them shown to be swimming,
while others are resting upon the rocks and drying their green hair
or riding along on a fish. The nymphs have different features,
but show the family likeness that might be expected in sisters.
Embossed on earth are the men in their cities and beasts in their forests;
the water-nymphs next to their streams and the other rural divinities.
Crowning these pictures the heavens, brightly portrayed, with the signs
of the zodiac, six on the right-hand door and six on the left.
Pháëthon quickly mounted the steep approach to the palace,

and entered the house of the god whom he wished to be sure was his father.
Marching boldly towards the face of his sire, he halted a little way off, as it hurt his eyes to come any closer.
Garbed in a robe of royal purple, radiant Phoebus* was sitting there on a throne which was glowing with brilliant emeralds.
Standing close on his right and his left were the Spirits of Day,
of Month and of Year, the Centuries and Hours at their equal intervals.
Also in waiting were youthful Spring with her wreath of flowers,
Summer naked but for her garland of ripening corn ears,
Autumn stained with the juice of trodden clusters of grapes,
And icy Winter, whose aged locks were hoary and tangled.
Then from his place in the centre the Sun, with his all-seeing eyes,
caught sight of the young man trembling in awe of his strange surroundings.
'Why have you come?' he enquired. 'And what do you seek in this stronghold,
Phaëthon, offspring of mine, whom his father could never disown?'
'O Phoebus, my father, light that illumines the infinite universe,'
answered the youth, 'if you will allow me to call you my father,
if Clýmene is not trying to cloak some guilty secret,
grant me a sign, my father, whereby all men must believe
that I am truly your son, and banish this doubt from my own mind.'
Then, in response, his father removed the circlet of sparkling

rays which adorned his head, commanded the youth to come nearer,
and folded him close in his arms. 'You are truly mine,' he assured him.
'Denial would do you injustice, and Clymene did not deceive you.
Away with your doubts! Now ask me whatever favour you will,
and I shall bestow it. To witness my promise, I call on the Stygian
marsh which the gods must swear by, though I have never set eyes on it.'
Phaëthon answered at once. He asked for his father's chariot,
with leave to control the wing-footed horses, for just one day.
His father at once regretted his oath. Repeatedly shaking
his lustrous head, he exclaimed: 'Your request has proved my promise
too rash. How I wish I could break it! Dear son, I confess to you freely,
this is the only wish I could ever be moved to refuse you.
Still, I can argue against it. Believe me, you're looking for danger!
The favour you ask is great, my Phaëthon, far too great
for the strength that you have. You are only a boy, too young to attempt it.
Your destiny's mortal; your wishes transcend your mortal limits.
Indeed your ignorant heart is pursuing what even immortals
can never attain. We all may flatter ourselves as we will,
yet none save I has the strength to stand in the fiery chariot
and hold his footing. Even the ruler of vast Olympus,
who hurls the deadly thunderbolts forth from his awesome hand,
shall never control this car; and what have we greater than Jove?

The start of the journey is steep; though the horses are fresh in the morning,
the climb is a mighty haul. The highest stretch is mid-heaven,
where even I am often afraid to look down on the lands
and the sea below, and my heart is aflutter with quivering terror.
The end is a downward path and calls for impeccable steering;
then even Tethys, the goddess who welcomes me into the waves
as I set, can tremble with fear that my fall will be over-precipitous.
Recognize too that the sky spins round in a constant vortex,
drawing the stars on high as they whirl in their swift revolutions.
My impetus thrusts against it, unswayed by the forces which master
all else, and in driving my steeds I oppose the sphere's swift motion.
Suppose that I lend you my car, what then? Can you really encounter
the poles without being swept away by their rapid rotation?
Perhaps you imagine you'll find the groves of the gods up there,
with their beautiful cities and sanctuaries richly laden with offerings.
No! Your path is beset with beasts* that are lying in ambush.
Even supposing you hold your course and are not diverted,
your journey will take you straight to the horns of the charging Bull,
straight to the centaur Archer and straight to the jaws of the raging

Lion; then on to the Scorpion, whose menacing arms are bent
in a long wide sweep, and the Crab with his claws of a smaller range.
Moreover, it's far from easy to govern those spirited horses,
strong with the fire in their breasts which they breathe from their mouths and nostrils,
and little inclined to obey even my firm hands when their mettle
is hotly aroused and their necks are resisting the pull of the reins.
Oh listen, my son! Don't force me to make you a gift that can only
prove fatal. Be warned and amend your prayer before it's too late.
I can understand that you need some indisputable proof
that my own blood runs in your veins. So here you have it: my fatherly
fears and misgivings prove me to be your father. Look, boy,
look at my face. How I wish your eyes were able to pierce
deep down to my heart and catch a glimpse of your father's anxiety.
Finally, look all round you: survey whatever the wealthy
cosmos contains, and make your choice of the bountiful riches
of earth and sea and sky. Be sure I'll refuse you nothing.
This one thing only I beg you not to demand. It's a sentence,
not honour you're asking for; punishment, Phaëthon, never a present.
Why are your fingers caressing my neck, you ignorant boy?
Never fear, I have sworn by the Stygian marsh, and I'll surely give you
whatever you choose to ask for. But choose more wisely, I beg you!'
His warnings were finished, but Phaëthon still resisted the sun god's

pleas and pressed his request in his burning desire for the chariot.
And so, delaying as long as he could, his father conducted
the young man down to the lofty conveyance which Vulcan had made him.
The axle and pole were constructed of gold, and golden too
was the rim encircling the wheels, which were fitted with spokes of silver.
Chrysolites, jewels arranged in a pattern along the yoke,
reflected their brilliant splendour on shining Phoebus himself.
And while self-confident Phaëthon studied the car in amazement
at such fine workmanship, Dawn was awake to open her purple
gates in the glimmering east and bathe her forecourt in roseate
glory; the stars were routed, and Lucifer brought up the rear,
as last of all he abandoned his watch in the brightening sky.
When Titan saw that the morning star was inclining earthward,
the sky growing pink and the horns of the waning moon disappearing,
he gave the command to the fleet-footed Hours to harness his steeds.
The goddesses quickly performed his bidding. Forth from the lofty
stables they led the fire-breathing stallions, fully refreshed
with ambrosia juice, and carefully fastened the jingling bridles.
Next the father anointed the face of his son with a holy

balsam, to offer protection against the scorching flames,
and placed his radiant crown on the young man's head.
Then heaving
sighs from his troubled heart in gloomy foreboding, he
said:
'If you are still able to take one piece of advice from your
father,
spare the goad, my son, and put more strength in the reins.
My horses will speed unencouraged; the task is to curb their
impatience.
Don't follow a route directly across the sky's five zones:
the path is cut at a slanting angle and runs in a wide arc,
well inside the three middle zones and carefully avoiding
the southern pole and the zone to the north with its biting
winds.
You must keep to that road – the ruts from my wheels will
be clearly visible;
then, to give earth and sky an equal share of your warmth,
don't drive the chariot down or scale the top of the ether.
Venture to climb too high, and you'll burn the ceiling of
heaven,
the earth if you sink too low; for safety remain in the
middle.
Swerving too far to the right, you'll be caught in the coils of
the Serpent;
too far to the left, you'll collide with the Altar* near the
horizon.
Hold to a course in between. The rest I resign to Fortune;
I pray her to help and take care of you better than you take
care
of yourself. As I speak, the dewy night has reached its
appointed
goal on the shores of the west. The time for delaying is over.
The summons has come, for the darkness has fled and
Auróra is glowing.
Now grasp the reins in your hands – or if your ambitious
purpose
can yet be altered, take my advice and not my chariot.

Allow me to give my light to the earth, and watch me in safety
While still you can, while still you are standing on solid earth,
Before you have blindly mounted the car you so foolishly asked for.'

Phaëthon nimbly jumped into place on the light-framed chariot.
Standing aloft, he excitedly seized the featherweight reins
and shouted his thanks from the car to his worried and anxious father.
Meanwhile the sun god's team of winged horses – Fiery, Dawnsteed,
Scorcher and Blaze – were impatiently filling the air with their whinnies,
snorting out flames and kicking the bolted gates with their hooves.
As soon as Tethys,* blind to the fate which awaited her grandson,
had shot the bolts back and the limitless sky was open before them,
at once they were off; and galloping forward into the air,
they cut through the mists which stood in their way; then rose on their wings
and quickly outdistanced the winds which had sprung up too in the east.
But the load that they carried was light, not one that the Sun's strong horses
could easily feel, and the yoke seemed far less heavy than usual.
As ships with inadequate ballast will toss and roll on the billows,
swept along through the ocean, too light to be firmly stable,

so Phoebus' chariot, robbed of its normal weight, leapt high
in the air, tossed up from below, as though it were empty.
As soon as they sensed this, the four-horse team ran wild, and leaving
the well-worn track, they continued galloping helter-skelter.
Phaëthon panicked. He lacked both the skill to manage the reins
entrusted to him and all idea of the line of his route;
and if he had known it, the horses would still have been out of control.
It was then that the stars of the Northern Plough, which are known as the Oxen,
lost their chill in the rays and, growing too hot, for the first time
vainly attempted to bathe in the sea which had always been barred to them.*
Likewise the Serpent, whose home is close to the polar icecaps,
sluggishly cold before and dangerous to none, for the first time
started to swelter and sweat and seethed with a new-found fury.
Even Boötes who guards the Bear is said to have fled
in confusion, slow though he was and heavily tied to his wain.
But when the unhappy Phaëthon looked from the top of the firmament
down on the earth and saw it lying so far, far deep beneath him,
terror suddenly struck him: his face turned pale and his knees shook;
his vision grew darkly blurred in the dazzling, glaring brightness.
He dearly wished that he'd never set hands on his father's steeds;

he regretted the quest for his birthright and winning the favour he'd asked for.
Longing now to be known as Merops' son, he was swept
along like a ship at the north wind's mercy, whose pilot abandons
the tiller as useless and trusts the craft to the gods and to prayers.
But what could he do? Long miles of sky lay behind him, more
were ahead. He measured his route both ways, as he first looked forward
out to the west, which fate never meant him to reach, and then
looked back to the east. Bewildered and dazed, he could neither let go
of the reins nor cling on; and he couldn't remember the names of the horses.
To add to his terror, dispersed all over the patterned sky,
he spied some phenomenal shapes in the likeness of huge wild beasts.
Right there, a creature was curving its pincers out into two great
arcs – the Scorpion, with menacing tail and its claws flexed round
each way to encompass the space of two whole signs* of the zodiac.
When youthful Phaëthon sighted it, soaked in a sweat of black venom,
curving its spear-point tail towards him and threatening to sting,
he was frozen with fear and, completely unnerved, let go of the reins.
When the steeds were aware of the reins lying loosely over their backs,
they broke from their course and, with no one to check them, they wildly bolted

through unknown regions of air, wherever their instinct led them.
They galloped at random, charging the stars in their fixed positions
high in the heavenly vault, and forcing the chariot along
through the trackless sky, now scaling the topmost heights, now hurtling
down in a headlong dive through space more close to the earth.
The moon was astonished to see her brother's horses careering
below her own; and smoke rose up from the smouldering clouds.

The earth now burst into flames on all of the hills and the mountains,
split into huge wide cracks, and dried as it lost its moisture.
The corn turned white and the trees were charred into leafless skeletons;
parched grain offered the perfect fuel for self-ruination.
These losses were trifling. Destruction fell upon great walled cities;
mighty nations with all their peoples the conflagration
turned into ashes. Fire swept over the forest-clad mountains:
Athos, Cilícian Taurus, Tmolus and Oeta were blazing;
Ida, once the home of innumerable springs, now waterless;
Hélicon, haunt of the Muses, and Haemus before it was known
to Órpheus; Etna ablaze to the heavens, its flames now doubled;
twin-summited Mount Parnássus with Eryx, Cynthus and Othrys;
Rhódope, forced at last to be free of its snows; then Mimas,
Díndyma, Mýcale, even the haven of worship, Cithaéron;
Scythia's frosts were of no avail; fire blazed on the Caúcasus,

Ossa with Pindus, and Mount Olympus, taller than both;
the Alps which soar to the sky and the cloud-capped Ápennine range.
Phaëthon now looked down on a world in flames; not a region
remained unscorched. He couldn't endure the force of the heat;
the blasts of the air which he breathed seemed to come from the depths of a seething
furnace; his feet could feel his chariot growing red-hot.
The ashes and showers of flying sparks were more than the boy
was able to stand, while all around he was shrouded in hot smoke.
Wrapped in the pitchy darkness, he didn't know where he was going
nor where he might be, as the winged steeds swept him along at their mercy.
It was then, as mortals believe, that the Ethiopian peoples
acquired dark skins as their blood was drawn to the body's surface;
Libya then was turned to a desert when all of her moisture
was lost in the heat. And then the nymphs, with their hair spread loose,
wept over their fountains and pools. Boeótia lamented for Dirce,
Argos Amýmone, Éphyre sighed for the springs of Piréne.
Even the waters whose rivers flow in commodious channels
suffered some evil effects: steam rose from the waves of the Tánais,
old Penéüs, Caïcus in Mýsia, swift Isménus,
Arcádia's broad Erymánthus, the yellow Lycórmas and Xanthus,

fated to burn again when it fought with Achílles;* the playfully
winding Maeánder, Mygdónian Melas and Spartan Eurótas.
The Babylonian Euphrátes was all aflame; likewise
Oróntes, rapid Thermódon, Ganges, Phasis and Hister.
The coursing Alphéüs boiled; Sperchéüs' banks were on fire;
and the gold in the sands of the Tagus was melted and flowed like its waters.
The Lydian swans, whose singing has made the banks of Caÿster
famous, succumbed to the sweltering heat as they floated mid-river.
Stricken with terror, the Nile took flight to the ends of the earth,
and covered its head where it still lies hidden;* its seven-mouthed delta
was emptied of water and filled with dust, seven riverless valleys.
A similar fate dried up the Thracian Hebrus and Strymon;
the western rivers as well, the Rhine and the Rhone and the Padus;
lastly the Tiber,* destined one day to be lord of the world.
The whole of the earth-face split and the light penetrated the cracks
to the underworld, filling the King of the Shades and his consort with terror.
The sea contracted; a broad expanse of dry sand replaced
what had lately been ocean. Mountains hidden below the surface
emerged from the deep to increase the score of the scattered Cýclades.
Fish dived down to the seabed and dolphins dared no longer
to arch their bodies and jump the billows into the breezes.
Seals were lying with upturned bellies on top of the water,

lifelessly floating. They say that even Nereus and Doris
along with their daughters took refuge in caves which
were far from cool;
and a grim-faced Neptune thrice attempted to heave his
shoulders
above the water, but could not endure the scorching
air.
The great Earth Mother, however, still girdled round
by the ocean,
could sense its waters, although her springs were
thinned to a trickle
and hidden away in the dark of her own bowels.
Parched as she was,
she succeeded in raising her head and neck from the
smothering ashes,
and shielded her brow from the heat with her hand.
With a violent tremor
she shook the world in a mighty quake, then subsided
a little,
below the height of her normal level, and uttered in
cracked tones:
'King of the Gods, if this is your wish and I have
deserved it,
why is your lightning idle? If I must perish by fire,
let the fire be yours! The blow would be lighter if you
had dealt it.
I hardly can open my lips to voice these very
petitions –'
the smoke was choking her. 'Look at my singed hair,
look at the ashes
coating my eyes and face! Is this the respect that you
show me?
Is this the reward for the crops that I yield and the
service I render,
bearing the wounds of the plough and harrow, harshly
exploited
and worked from one year's end to the next, supplying
the grazing

cattle with wholesome verdure, the grain to nourish the human
race, and frankincense for you gods to receive on your altars?
Let's say that I have deserved my destruction; but what has your brother,
what have the waves done wrong? Why have the waters allotted
to Neptune by fate gone down and are farther away from the sky?
But if your brother's favours and mine to you count for nothing,
at least you can pity your own domain. Look round at the two poles:
smoke is pouring from each. If they suffer damage from fire,
the halls of the gods will collapse. See, Atlas himself is in trouble:
his shoulders can barely sustain the weight of the white-hot vault.
If the seas and the lands must perish and even the realms of the sky,
we are back to confusion and primal chaos. I beg you to rescue
whatever is left from the flames. Take thought for the good of the universe!'
Earth had ended her speech; she couldn't endure the smoke
and the heat any longer or say any more. She lowered her head
back into herself and sank to the caves adjoining the underworld.
Now the Father omnipotent called on the gods to witness,
especially Phoebus who'd lent his chariot: failing his own help,
all of the world would be doomed, he said. Then he made for the heights
from where he normally veils the earth in a mantle of cloud

and also awakens the thunder and launches his lightning bolts.
But now the clouds that he needed to cover the whole wide earth
and the rain to pour from the sky were lacking. So what was the answer?
A thunderclap! Next a bolt was carefully poised by his right ear.
Jupiter hurled it at Phaëthon, flinging both driver from chariot
and life from body at once. He quenched one fire with another.
The horses stampeded. Rearing up in different directions,
they slipped the yoke from their necks and tore the reins as they broke loose.
Here the bridle was tossed, and there the pole with the ripped-off
axle, there the spokes of the shattered wheels and, scattered
all over the ether, the fragments of metal which once were a chariot.
Phaëthon's corpse spun down head first, with the fire of the thunderbolt
scorching his flame-red hair. He fell through the sky in a long trail,
blazing away like a comet which sometimes appears in a clear sky,
never to land upon earth, but looking as if it is falling.
Far from his home, in a distant part of the world, the Erídanus,
longest of rivers, received him and washed the smoke from his charred face.
The Hespérian naiads found his body, perceptibly showing
the three-forked lightning's effects, and buried it there in a tomb.

They also inscribed the stone of his grave with the following epitaph:

HERE LIES PHAËTHON, CHARIOTEER OF
HIS FATHER'S HORSES.
THEY BOLTED AND BROUGHT HIM LOW;
BUT HIGH WERE HIS SPIRIT AND DARING.

What of his father? Wretchedly stricken and sick with grief,
he had covered his face with his robe. If we can believe what is said,
the Sun went into eclipse for a day. Such light as was there
was due to the fire – some good, at least, had come out of evil.
Clymene, for her part, gave voice to all the laments
which the terrible tragedy called for; and then, distraught in her sorrow,
she travelled the whole world, beating her breast and tearing her garments.
Her quest was firstly for Phaëthon's lifeless limbs, and later
his bones, which she found interred on the bank of an alien river.
Prostrating her body to read the name inscribed in the marble,
she steeped it in tears and warmed the words with her naked breasts.
Phaëthon's sisters, the Héliades, mourned no less bitterly,
weeping in useless tribute to death and beating their bosoms.
Sprawled all over the grave, by night and by day they loudly
called on their brother, whose ears their wailing could never reach.
Four crescent moons had already waxed and come to their fullness;
the sisters had done their lamenting as usual (constant practice
had turned it into a habit), when Phaëthúsa, the eldest,

wishing to sink to the ground, complained that her feet had gone cold
and rigid. When lovely Lampátië tried to come and assist her,
her limbs were suddenly rooted fast to the place where she stood.
A third who was making ready to tear her innocent tresses,
found she was plucking off leaves. Then one of her sisters moaned
that her legs were caught in the grip of a tree trunk, just as the other
woefully cried that her arms were changing to lengthy branches.
To crown their amazement, bark began to enclose their loins,
and gradually covered their bellies, their bosoms, their shoulders and arms,
till all that appeared was their pleading mouths calling out for their mother.
What was their mother to do but scurry about back and forth,
wherever her impulse led her, and kiss their lips while she could?
It wasn't enough. She attempted to strip the bark from their bodies
and break the young branches off with her hands, but all that emerged
was a trickle of human blood, like drops from an open wound.
'Stop hurting me, mother, please!' whoever was bleeding entreated,
'I beg you to stop! It's *me* you are tearing inside the tree!
And now, farewell' – on these final words, the bark closed over.
However, the tears flowed on; as they dripped from the new-formed poplars,

the sun's rays set them to beads of amber, which fell in the gleaming
river, who sent them on to be worn by the brides of Látium.

There to witness this wondrous event was the son of Sthénelus,
Cycnus. He was related to Phaëthon through his mother,
but feelings of friendship between them were stronger than kinship. Distraught,
he abandoned his kingdom (he ruled the Ligúrian people and governed
their mighty cities) and chanted his sorrow along the Erídanus'
grassy banks and through the woods that the sisters had now joined.
Suddenly Cycnus' voice grew thin and his hair was disguised
in pure white feathers; his neck stretched out well away from his shoulders;
his toes grew red and were bound together in weblike feet;
his sides were covered with wings; and his face jutted out in a blunt bill.
Cycnus became a new bird, the swan; but he wouldn't entrust
himself to the sky and to Jove; he remembered the fire so unjustly
launched by the god. His haunts were the ponds and the open lakes;
abhorring all fire, he preferred to inhabit its opposite, water.

Meanwhile Phaëthon's father, unkempt in his mourning, had lost
his accustomed splendour, as though there had been a solar eclipse.
Detesting the daylight and so himself, he surrendered his spirit

to grief. He was angry into the bargain, and therefore refused
to work for the world any longer. 'Enough is enough!' he protested.
'I've not been given a break since time began, and I'm tired
of endlessly toiling away without some small recognition.
Somebody else for a change can drive the chariot bringing
the light. If nobody volunteers and all of the gods
admit that the task is beyond them, let Jupiter have a try.
If he takes over those reins of mine, at least he'll be forced
to dispense for a while with the lightning which steals young sons from their fathers.
Once he has tested the power of my fire-footed horses, he'll learn
that failure to keep them under control doesn't merit destruction!'
Such were the Sun's complaints till the rest of the gods stood round him,
humbly imploring him not to plunge the whole of the world
into darkness. Jupiter also defended his hurling the thunderbolt,
dropping a regal threat or two to support the entreaties.
So Phoebus rounded his horses up, still out of their minds
and quaking with terror; then once they were harnessed, he vented his grief
by applying the goad and the lash with all of the rage that was boiling
inside him, cursing and blaming *them* for his son's misfortune.

CALLISTO

Then the Almighty Father conducted a tour of inspection
around the walls of the sky, in case the great fire's impact
had caused them to weaken and crumble down. When he
saw they were still
as strong and stable as ever, he turned his attention to
earth
and the works of mankind. Arcadia, where he was born,
engaged
his particular care. He revived the fountains and rivers
which still
were reluctant to flow, put grass on the soil and leaves on
the trees,
and ordered the blackened forests to burst once more into
green.
As he busily came and went, an Arcadian virgin suddenly
caught his fancy and fired his heart with a deep-felt
passion.
Callísto was not in the habit of spinning wool at the
distaff
or stylishly dressing her hair; her garment was clasped by a
simple
brooch, while a plain white band kept her loose-flowing
tresses in order.
Armed with her smooth-polished javelin or bow, she served
as a soldier
in Phoebe's troop; of the maidens who hunted on
Maénalus' slopes
Diana cherished her best – but no one's favour is lasting.
The sun had climbed to the height of the sky; it was soon
after midday.
Callisto entered a forest whose trees no axe had deflowered,
and here she removed the quiver she wore on her shoulder
and loosened
the string of her supple bow; then laid herself down on the
greensward,

resting her pure white neck on her painted quiver for pillow.
When Jupiter spied her lying exhausted and unprotected,
he reckoned: 'My wife will never discover this tiny betrayal;
or else, if she does, oh yes, the joy will make up for the scolding!'
At once he assumed the features and dress of the goddess Diana,
and said to the damsel, 'Young maiden, I see you are one of my dear
companions. Where on the slopes have you hunted today?' The young maiden
raised herself up from the grass and replied, 'Hail, goddess! I judge you
greater than Jove, though he hear it himself.' Jove chuckled to hear it,
delighted she judged him greater than Jove, and gave her a passionate
kiss on the lips, not the kiss that a virgin goddess would give.
As she started to detail where in the forest she'd hunted, he gripped her
tight in his arms, and his subsequent felony gave him away.
Callisto herself, as far as a feeble woman was able
(if only Juno had seen it, she would have been more understanding),
Callisto fought back; but indeed what man could a girl be a match for,
let alone Jupiter? He, in the flush of his victory, made for
the sky; while she could only detest the forests and woodlands
which knew her secret. Returning, she almost forgot to recover
her quiver and arrows and even the bow she had hung on a tree.

And now, the real Diana arrived with her train of attendants
along Mount Maenalus, flushed with pride in her hunting triumphs.
Sighting Callisto, she called to the girl, who responded by running
away, as she still was afraid that it might be Jupiter there
in the guise of Diana. But seeing her nymphs processing beside her,
she realized it wasn't a trick and attached herself to the others.
How difficult not to betray our guilt in our facial expression!
Her eyes were fixed on the ground, and she wouldn't resume her position
close to the side of the goddess in front of the whole procession.
Her silence and blushes were telling signs that she'd lost her virtue.
Diana, but for being a virgin, could well have detected
her guilt by a thousand tokens. The nymphs are said to have noticed.
Eight moons had waned and the horns of the ninth had begun to appear
when, weary with hunting and overcome by the heat of her brother,*
the goddess entered the cool of a wood, where a babbling brook
was smoothly flowing along its familiar sandy bed.
'What a charming spot!' she exclaimed, as she dipped her toe in the water.
'The temperature's perfect, and nobody's here to spy on us bathing.
Let's take off our clothes and refresh ourselves with a nice, cool swim.'
Callisto's face turned crimson; while everyone else undressed,

she tried to wait; and while she dithered, they stripped
off her tunic.
When this was removed, her naked body exposed her
shame.
In utter confusion she moved her hands to cover her
belly.
'Be gone!' cried the goddess. 'This sacred spring must not
be polluted!'
And so her favourite was sternly commanded to leave her
presence.
The mighty Thunderer's lady had long been aware
of her husband's
liaison, but waited to wreak her revenge till a suitable
moment.
That moment had now arrived: to aggravate Juno's
resentment,
Jupiter's mistress had given birth to a boy called Arcas.
Swooping down on Callisto with eyes as mean as her
purpose,
'So this was the crowning insult, adulterous whore,'
she exclaimed –
'becoming pregnant! You had to make your
wickedness public
and testify to my Jove's disgrace by having a baby.
I'll make you pay, by destroying those lovely looks
which allow you
to fancy yourself and attract my husband, you
shameless hussy!'
Saying these words, she grabbed Callisto's hair from
the front
and tugged her down to the ground. As the girl
stretched out her arms
in a plea for mercy, they started to grow black,
bristling hairs;
her hands were turned into animal's feet, as they bent
and extended
in long hooked claws; and the beautiful lips which Jove
had so lately

admired were broadened out and transformed to the ugliest
jaws.
To prevent her appealing for pity by prayers or words of
entreaty,
her powers of speech were wrested away, and her hoarse
throat only
emitted an angry, menacing, terror-inspiring growl.
But though her body was now a bear's, her emotions were
human.
Continual groaning testified to her inner anguish;
such hands as she had were lifted up to the sky and the
stars;
if Jove's ingratitude couldn't be spoken, she still could
feel it.
Poor creature! She never dared to rest in the shady forest,
but often wandered over the well-known fields or in front
of her former home. She often was driven over the rocks
by the yelping hounds, and the huntress would flee in terror
from huntsmen.
Often she hid when she saw wild beasts and forgot her new
nature;
the she-bear trembled at bears whom she spied on the
mountains, and even
was horribly scared of the wolves, though one was her
father, Lycáön.*

And now Lycaön's grandson, the baby Arcas, had grown
to a lad of fifteen, with no idea of his mother's plight.
He was hunting beasts and choosing suitable glades to
entrap them,
ringing the green Erymánthian woods with his close-woven
nets,
when quite by chance he encountered his mother. On seeing
the boy,
she stopped in her tracks and looked as if she recognized
Arcas.
He took to his heels. Those staring eyes unceasingly fixed
on him

filled him with terror, he knew not why. As she lumbered closer
towards her son, he'd have pierced her breast with his pointed javelin.
But Jove the omnipotent countered the blow, and averted an impious
crime by transporting them both through space. They were wafted together
and granted places in heaven as neighbouring constellations.*
Juno was furious, seeing her rival brilliantly sparkling
among the stars. Going down to the sea, she visited white-haired
Tethys and ancient Ocean, deities well respected
by gods as a rule; and when they enquired what had prompted her journey,
she answered, 'You ask why I who am queen of the gods have descended
here from my heavenly throne? My place in the sky is usurped!
I am telling a lie if tonight, when the heavens are shrouded in darkness,
you fail to observe new stars, given honour to mortify *me*,
at the top of the sky, in the place where the outermost ring
with the smallest circumference orbits the farthest point of the axis.*
Will anyone now be reluctant to slight great Juno, or tremble
when I am offended? Who else means harm but can only do good?
Look at my splendid achievements, the vast extent of my influence!
The woman I changed to a beast is now transformed to a goddess;

that's how I punish the guilty and show my tremendous
power!
Oh, let him restore her human appearance and kindly
remove
her animal face, as he did in the case of the Argive Io!
Juno could be divorced, Callisto married and duly
installed in my bedroom. Lycaön could be Jove's
father-in-law!
Why doesn't he do it? I turn to you both as my
foster-parents.*
If you are perturbed by these insults, debar those Bears*
from your blue waves.
Reject any star which has won its place in the sky as a
prize
for the lewdest indulgence. Don't let that harlot pollute
your waters!'

THE RAVEN AND THE CROW

The sea-gods nodded assent, and Juno's chariot was ready
to mount the translucent ether, drawn by her
bright-coloured peacocks,
whose feathers had recently gained their eyes from the
murdered Argus,
about the time when the chattering raven, who once had
been white,
was suddenly altered and given his plumage of dusky
black.
To explain, this bird had long in the past been silvered with
snow-white
feathers as gleaming and pure as the spotless wings of a
dove,
pure as the watchful geese whose squawking would one day
rescue
the Roman Capitol,* pure as the swans whose home is the
rivers.

His tongue was the cause of the raven's downfall; thanks to his talkative
nature, his earlier whiteness of colour was changed to its opposite.
No other girl in the whole of Thessaly rivalled Laríssan
Corónis in beauty. Phoebus adored her, at least for the time
she was faithful and undetected in other affairs. But Apollo's
raven caught her being unchaste, and the merciless tell-tale
thought he should go to his master, to tell him the truth of this secret
liaison. En route he was closely pursued by the chattering crow,
who flapped up beside him, agog to know all the latest news.
When the raven explained what his business was, the crow then told him:
'Your journey's in vain. Let my own tongue serve as a serious warning!
See what I was and what I am now, and ask me the reason.
You'll find that my loyalty did me no good. Some time ago
a child, Erichthónius, born of the soil* and not of a mother,
was hidden by Pallas inside an Athenian osier basket.
She handed this on to the three young daughters of two-formed Cecrops,*
with strict instructions not to examine its secret contents.
Concealing myself in the rustling leaves of an aged elm tree,
I watched to see what they'd do. Two of them, Hérse and Pándrosos,

faithfully heeded the goddess' orders; the third, Aglaúros,
calling her sisters cowards, unravelled the knots; and inside
they discovered a baby boy with a snake extending beside him.
I reported this to the goddess. And what was the thanks I received
for my help? I was formally stripped of my place as Minerva's protector
and ranked underneath the owl!* My punishment serves as a warning
to other birds not to chatter too much: it is asking for trouble.
'It wasn't as if I had asked to attend on her, or that she had not
chosen me freely. Check the facts with Minerva herself.
Despite her anger, she won't deny the truth of the matter.
The story's well known. I started life as a royal princess,
the daughter of famous Coróneus,* king of the Phocians. In time,
my hand was sought by the wealthiest suitors, I'd have you know;
but my beauty proved my undoing. Once I was gently strolling
as usual across the sand on the shore, when Neptune the sea god
saw me and instantly glowed with a burning passion. So after
he'd wasted time in useless entreaties and flattering speeches,
he started to chase me with violent intent. I fled and abandoned
the firm seashore but shortly collapsed in the softer sand.
Then I called upon gods and men to support me. My cries never reached
any mortal ears; but a virgin goddess was moved by a virgin's

prayers to come to my aid. When I raised my arms to the heavens,
they started to blacken and sprout light feathers. I next attempted
to cast my mantle away from my shoulders, but even that
was already plumage, rooted deep in the folds of my skin.
I tried to rain blows on my naked breast with my sturdy hands,
but my sturdy hands were no more and my breast was no longer naked.
I started to run. This time my feet were not clogged in the sand
and I rose from the surface of earth and soon was soaring in air.
So thus I was given my role as Minerva's blameless attendant.
And yet what good does that do, if I'm forced to surrender my place
to the owl, who became a bird by committing a dreadful crime?
That owl was once Nyctímene. Haven't you heard the story,
known through the whole of Lesbos, of how she corrupted her father*
by incest with him? For sure, she's a bird; but her guilty conscience
drives her to shun the eyes of men and the glare of the daylight.
She hides her shame in the dark, excluded by all from the clear sky.'
The raven ignored this tale: 'May these ominous warnings of yours
rebound on your own head! I've no use for your foolish predictions!'
Postponing his visit to Phoebus no longer, he told his master

he'd caught Coronis with her Thessalian in bed together.
When he heard of his lover's defection, Apollo's laurel-wreath slipped,
his colour faded, his jaw then dropped, and his plectrum fell
to the ground. His wounded heart was seething and swelling with anger.
He seized his familiar weapons and, flexing his bow from its horn tips,
fired his arrow, which none can escape, to transfix the bosom,
the lovely bosom he'd pressed to his own in their many embraces.
Coronis, wounded, groaned with the pain; as she drew the arrow
out of her body, the crimson blood gushed over her white limbs.
'Phoebus,' she cried, 'I might have paid you the price I deserved,
yet given my child to you first; as it is, we shall leave you together,
mother and baby in one.' She spoke no further; her blood
flowed out, and the chill of death crept over her lifeless body.
Apollo sorely regretted exacting a vengeance so cruel,
but all too late. He cursed himself for his listening ear
and his fiery anger. He cursed the bird who had forced him to know
the offence which had given him cause for resentment. He cursed his bow
and the hand that had drawn it, along with the arrow he'd fired so rashly.
He clasped her fallen limbs to his breast, belatedly struggling
to baffle fate, but his healing arts were deployed to no purpose.
Finding that all his attempts were vain, that the funeral pyre

was being prepared and those limbs would soon be on fire in the flames,
at last he burst into pitiful groans from the depths of his being
(the cheeks of the gods are never allowed to be moistened by tears),
like the pitiful groans of a heifer who's there at a sacrifice, watching
the hammer poised by the slaughterer's ear come down and shatter
the hollow skull of her unweaned calf with a sounding crack.
He poured on his loved one's breast his ungrateful offering of incense,
embraced her once more and performed the rites that should not have been due.
But Apollo could not allow the fruit of his loins to be lost
in Coronis' ashes; he snatched his son* from the womb of the burning
mother and carried him up to the cave of Chiron the centaur.*
As for the raven, who'd hoped to be thanked for revealing the truth,
he was barred by the god from the white birds' ranks and condemned to be black.

OCYRHOË

Meanwhile the centaur was taking delight in his foster-child
whom the god had fathered, enjoying the task no less than the tribute.
A vision of red-gold locks spread over white shoulders suddenly
came on the scene. It was Chiron's daughter, the child of the nymph

Carículo who'd borne her upon the banks of a fast-flowing river
and called her Ocýrhoë.* Not content to have merely mastered
her father's skills, the maiden could utter the secrets of fate.
And so, with the wind of prophetic madness inspiring her soul,
aglow with the fire of the godhead imprisoned within her breast,
she gazed at the infant and cried: 'Grow up, dear child, to become
the Healer of all the world. To you sick mortals shall often
acknowledge a debt for their lives; to you shall be granted the right
to revive dead spirits. To heaven's displeasure you'll dare this once,
but your grandfather's bolt shall prevent you from working a second miracle.
Thus you'll be turned from a god to a lifeless body, though later
again from body to god; your fate shall endure two changes.*
You too, my beloved father, are now immortal and destined
under the law of your birth to survive till the end of time;
and yet you shall long for the power to die, when the wound from an arrow
infects and tortures your limbs with the venomous blood of the Hydra.*
Then even you shall be freed by the gods from your deathless condition;
the Sisters Three* will consent and the thread of your life shall be broken.'
More words of fate remained to be spoken; but breathing a sigh
from the depths of her heart, and bedewing her cheeks with a fountain of tears,

the maiden continued: 'My destiny's running too fast, and I may not
prophesy further. My powers of speech are being obstructed.
My arts were purchased too dearly if they have directed the anger
of heaven against me. I wish I had never foreknown the future!
Now it appears that my human form is creeping away from me.
Grass is the food that I long for; I feel an impulse to gallop
across the wide plains. I am turning into a mare, akin
to my father. But why completely? My father is still half human.'
While she was speaking, the final part of her plaintive lament
could hardly be understood as her words had become confused.
Soon they were not even words, nor yet the sounds of a horse,
but more of a person aping those sounds. In the briefest of moments
she clearly whinnied and dropped her arms to the ground as forelegs.
Her fingers then coalesced and her five nails formed an unbroken
line in the shape of a light horn hoof; her mouth was extended
and so was her neck; the greater part of her long cloak turned
to a tail; and the red-gold hair which had loosely covered her shoulders
was changed to a mane on the right of her neck. Her voice and her body
were altered alike; and the miracle gave her a new name, Hippe.*

BATTUS

Chiron wept for his daughter and called on Apollo to help
him,
but all in vain. The god was in no position to cancel
Jupiter's edict and, even supposing he had been able,
he then was abroad and firmly engaged in the Péloponnese.
That was the time when the god of Delphi was playing the
herdsman,
dressed in a cloak of hide, with a rustic crook in his left
hand,
clutching his pipes of seven unequal reeds in his right.
While his thoughts were distracted by love and he mooned
away on his panpipes,
the cattle he'd left unguarded are said to have wandered
into
the fields near Pylos. These were sighted by Mercury,
Atlas'
grandson, who craftily rustled and hid them away in the
forest.
No one observed this theft except for an old man, known
in that part of the country – Battus,* as all of the
neighbours called him.
Battus was watching over a herd of pedigree mares
in the grassy pastures and glades of his master, the wealthy
Néleus.
Mercury stopped him and, using his charm as he took him
aside,
he said, 'Whoever you are, my friend, if someone by any
chance asks after these cattle, do say that you haven't seen
them.
I wouldn't wish your kindness to go unrewarded. Here
is a nice plump cow for you!' Battus accepted the present
and answered,
'Go safely on! This stone will inform on you sooner
than I' –
and he pointed one out. So Jupiter's son pretended to leave,

but he soon returned in another guise with a different voice.
'Hey, herdsman, I need your help. Have you seen any cattle passing
along this way? They are stolen. Out with the truth! If you tell me,
I'll give you a cow for reward, with her bull thrown into the bargain.'
Old Battus couldn't resist this double offer. 'You'll find them
there, at the foot of those mountains,' he said – which was where they were.
Mercury gloatingly laughed: 'Would you show me up to myself,
you treacherous bastard? Me to myself?' And he turned the liar
into a hard flint rock, still known as a kind of informer,
the ancient stigma attaching itself to the innocent touchstone.*

AGLAUROS

Mercury shortly was on the wing, with his wand in hand.
In the course of his flight over Athens, Minerva's favourite city,
he saw the Munýchian fields and the groves of the learned Lycéüm.
It chanced that day that some pure young maidens, ritually chosen,
were moving in solemn procession towards the temple of Pallas,*
bearing upon their heads the flower-wreathed baskets containing
the knife and the grain and other holy things for the sacrifice.

The winged god spied them on their return, and directed his course
not straight towards them but round about in a gentle curve.
As a rapidly flying kite, on spying a sacrificed victim's
entrails, circles aloft in fear while the priests are clustering
round the altar; not venturing far away on his flapping
wings, he greedily hovers above the prey that he hopes for;
so Mercury followed a bending course in an easy movement,
circling round in the sky above the Acrópolis hill.
As the morning star with his radiant gleam outshines the rest
of the stellar orbs and himself is outshone by the golden moon,
so all the rest of the virgins were put in the shade by Herse,
the pride of the festal procession as well as her own companions.
Her beauty dumbfounded Jupiter's son. As he hovered suspended
in air, he burned with the flames of desire, like a bullet of lead shot,
launched by a Bálearic sling,* which glows increasingly bright
on its path through the clouds, acquiring a heat which it lacked before.
Mercury now changed course and abandoned the sky for the earth.
He assumed no disguise, as beauty is always so full of confidence.
Justly sure of his charms, he still took care to enhance them
by smoothing his hair and adjusting his cloak to make quite sure
it was hanging correctly, with all the gold on the border showing.
He checked that his staff, which raises and lowers the curtain of sleep,

had a polished look, that his feet were clean and his sandals gleaming.
The women's apartments had three bedchambers, richly adorned
with ivory-work and tortoiseshell inlay. The room on the right
was Pandrosos', that on the left Aglauros', with Herse's between them.
Aglauros, the first of the girls to notice Mercury coming,
ventured to ask his name and why he had entered their quarters.
The grandson of Atlas and Pleíone answered: 'I am the runner
who carries my father's orders from heaven, and he is none other
than Jove himself. I won't conceal my reason for coming.
I merely hope you'll be loyal to your sister and duly consent
to be known as the aunt of Mercury's child. I have come to make love
to beautiful Herse. Do a good turn for a lover, I beg you!'
Aglauros regarded the god with the same avaricious eyes
with which she had recently peeped at the hidden secrets of fair-haired
Pallas. She asked for a mass of gold in return for the service
he craved, then forced him to leave the palace until he could bring it.
The warrior goddess, Minerva, now turned her threatening gaze
on Aglauros. She heaved such a troubled sigh from the depths of her heart
that, in line with her powerful feelings, the goddess' breastplate, the aegis,

was heavily shaken. To think that this creature, with hands profane,
had uncovered her secrets and broken a solemn promise when taking
a furtive look at the motherless baby whom Vulcan had fathered!
A god as well as her sister would now be beholden to her,
and she herself would be rich with the gold she had greedily asked for!
At once Minerva sank to the cavern of Envy, a filthy
dwelling infested by black corruption. Buried away
in the depths of a valley, it never is blessed by the warmth of the sun
or the draught of a wind – a gloomy, numbingly cold domain,
forever without any fire, forever enveloped in darkness.
When the awesome maiden goddess of war had arrived at this cavern,
she stood on the threshold (she couldn't have entered so foul an abode)
and beat on the doors with the point of her spear. They unfolded open,
and there inside she saw Envy, consuming the flesh of vipers,
the food for her natural venom. She averted her face in disgust,
but the spirit picked herself up from the freezing ground, and dropping
the rest of her half-eaten snakes, lethargically ambled forward.
Seeing the goddess' handsome looks and her splendid armour,
she uttered a groan and contorted her face with a deep-drawn sigh.
That face is constantly pallid; her body is totally shrivelled;
her eyes are both at a squint, while her teeth are decayed and discoloured;

her nipples are green with gall and the poison drips from her tongue.
She never smiles, except when excited by watching pain,
nor can she sleep, there are so many torments to keep her awake;
she loathes the sight of human success, which adds to her constant
wasting away; she is gnawed herself, as she gnaws at her victims,
by torture that's self-inflicted. Although Minerva was filled
with the utmost revulsion towards this demon, she briefly addressed her:
'One of the daughters of Cecrops, Aglauros, must be infected
by you and your poison. See to it!' Saying no more, the goddess
took flight and launched herself up from the earth with the thrust of her spear.
Envy followed the goddess' flight with her squinting gaze
and, feebly muttering, contemplated Minerva's triumph
with angry resentment; then seized her stick, which was studded all over
with prickly thorns, and swathed herself in her black cloud cloak.
Wherever she made her progress, she trampled the flowering meadows,
withered the grass and lopped the tops of the tallest trees.
With the taint of her breath she foully polluted whole peoples, cities
and family dwellings. At last, when she'd sighted the heights of Athens,
strong in the pride of its talents and wealth, in the joys of peace,

she almost burst into tears; there was nothing there to be wept for!
But after she'd entered the room where the daughter of Cecrops was sleeping,
she did as the goddess had bidden and stroked Aglauros' breast
with her rust-stained hand, so packing the heart with her barb-hooked brambles.
Breathing her noxious poison, she infiltrated her victim's
bones and infused the lungs deep down with her pitch-black venom.
Next, to focus her target's mind on the cause of the malady,
Envy implanted an image of Herse, then of her sister's fortunate marriage, then of the god with his beautiful body,
magnifying each picture, so that Aglauros was maddened
and eaten up by her secret jealousy. Fretting by day
and fretting by night, she would moan in her wretchedness, slowly dissolved
by the foul corruption, as ice is melted by fitful sunshine.
Herse's good fortune rankled; the fire consuming her rival
burned like a bonfire of thorny brambles that's kindled beneath
but never bursts into flames, just steadily smokes and smoulders.
She often wanted to die to escape the sight of her sister's happiness, or to report the affair as a wicked sin
to her strait-laced father. At last she crouched by her sister's chamber
to bar the god's way. When he blithely arrived and attempted to coax her
with honeyed words of entreaty, she said, 'You can stop all that nonsense.
I shan't budge an inch from this place till *you've* been sent packing!'
'An excellent bargain!' the speedy Mercury answered. 'Let's keep it.'

One touch of his magic staff and the door flew open. Aglauros
tried to get up, but found that the limbs that are bent when a person
is sitting down were paralysed, gripped by a sluggish inertia.
She struggled hard to straighten her body and land on her feet,
but the joints of her knees had stiffened, a creeping chill had invaded
her fingers' ends, and her veins turned white as the blood retreated.
And like the malignant spread of a sadly incurable cancer,
creeping on to affect other perfectly healthy organs,
little by little the deadly chill crept into Aglauros'
breast and finally blocked the vital paths of her breathing.
She made no effort to speak, but if she had so attempted,
the passage for words had gone; her neck was encased in rock,
and her mouth had gone hard. She simply sat there, a lifeless statue;
the stone was not even white, but stained by her own black envy.

EUROPA

After the son of Maia had punished Aglauros' impious
words and ungodly thoughts, he abandoned the land called after
Pallas Athene and soared to the sky on his beating wings.
Here Jupiter took him aside and, without confessing his amorous

motives, said to him: 'Son, who always performs my bidding
so faithfully, wait no longer but rapidly follow your usual
flight path down to the earth and make for the land that
looks up
to your mother's star* on its left and is known by the people
as Sidon.
There you will notice the royal cattle grazing some distance
away in the mountain pastures. Drive them down to the
seashore.'
His words were obeyed. At once the cattle were off the
mountains
and on their way to the beach, where the daughter of King
Agénor
was often accustomed to play with her Tyrian* girl
companions.
Love and regal dignity, scarcely the best of friends,
are rarely discovered together. And so the father and ruler
of all the gods, whose right hand wields the three-forked
lightning,
whose nod can sway the whole world, discarded his mighty
sceptre
and clothed himself in the form of a bull. He lowed as he
mingled
amongst the steers, parading his beauty along in the fresh,
lush
grassland. His hide was the colour of snow before it is
trodden
by clumsy feet or turned to slush by the southerly rains.
The muscles stood out on his neck, he flaunted magnificent
dewlaps,
his horns were curved in an elegant twist – they might quite
well
have been crafted by hand – and were more transparent
than flawless gems.
There wasn't a threat in his brow or a fearsome glare in his
eyes;
his face was a picture of perfect peace. The princess Európa

gazed in wonder upon this gentle and beautiful creature.
At first, despite his unthreatening looks, she was
frightened to touch him;
but soon she approached with a garland of flowers for
his gleaming head.
Her lover was blissful and licked her hands as a
prelude to other
and sweeter pleasures, pleasures he barely, barely
could wait for.
Now he would gambol beside her, prancing around on
the green grass;
now he would rest his snow-white flank in the golden
sand.
As little by little her fears were allayed, he would offer
his front
to be stroked by her maidenly hand or his horns to be
decked with fresh garlands.
The princess even ventured to sit with her legs astride
on the back of the bull, unaware whose sides she was
resting her thighs on;
when Jupiter, gradually edging away from the land and
away
from the dry shore, placed his imposter's hooves in the
shallowest waves,
then advanced out further, and soon he was bearing
the spoils of his victory
out in mid-ocean. His frightened prize* looked back at
the shore
she was leaving behind, with her right hand clutching
one horn and her left
on his back for support, while her fluttering dress
swelled out in the sea-breeze.

BOOK 3

This book consists of six main stories, with a seventh inserted within the sixth. The formal connection between them is Thebes and the house of Cadmus. The first two and last two are all mini-epics of substantial length and overall seriousness; the middle two are considerably shorter and more light-hearted. The metamorphosis is sometimes central, sometimes only peripheral. Each story is distinct in its content and literary tone; but in all six we can detect an underlying theme in the idea of 'intrusion' or 'seeing the forbidden holy', followed by unhappy, even violent, consequences. In the four major tales note also the *ecphrases*, formal descriptions of natural surroundings which are more than purely decorative: they suggest that elemental forces in nature are at work.

Cadmus (1–137) is in fairly traditional epic mode and we can relish the hero's exciting fight with the dragon and the sowing of the monster's teeth to grow into armed men. In *Actaeon* (138–252) the approach is more subjective and subtle. When Actaeon suddenly catches sight of Diana and her nymphs bathing, it is purely accidental. He is not a voyeur, but Ovid has already presented the sight to his audience in a voyeuristic way. He then invites us to sympathize with the stag, who (like Io in Book 1) retains his human feelings but cannot communicate with his own huntsmen and the dogs who tear him to pieces.

The blasting of *Semele* (253–315) by Jupiter's lightning may not be a laughing matter, but there is plenty of comedy in its telling, particularly in the characterization of the jealous Juno and the disguise she adopts. The story of *Teiresias* (316–38) is

also told in a light-hearted context, even if the blindness inflicted by the slighted Juno is grossly unfair.

In *Narcissus and Echo* (339–510) the atmosphere changes again in a mixture of sophistication and pathos. Echo's encounter with Narcissus is relayed in an extremely entertaining way, but her demise is surely very sad. We can even identify too with the egocentric youth who, when he falls in love with his own reflection, is in a sense intruding upon himself and so acquiring the self-knowledge which Teiresias has warned will have fatal consequences. Here Ovid is evidently fascinated by the paradox of an identification between subject and object, active and passive. The monologues that he gives Narcissus are extraordinarily clever in their word-play as well as pathetic in tone.

Pentheus and Bacchus (511–81, 692–733) owes a number of details to Euripides' play *The Bacchae*, as does the inset story of *Acoetes and the Lydian Sailors* (582–691) (which provides the metamorphosis) to the Homeric *Hymn to Dionysus*. However, readers who know Euripides' great tragedy will find many differences. The central part of the first section (511–81) is Pentheus' harangue to the Thebans, which seems to be a rabid parody of the Augustan propaganda which championed the Roman values of martial valour and denounced alien effeminacy. The narration of Acoetes has its moments of magic and excitement, but the overall tone is cooler and almost jolly when the mutinous sailors take to the waves as dolphins. The frenetic mood returns for the violent climax to the book when Pentheus is torn to pieces by his mother, Agave, and her sisters. Order is restored in the quiet coda of the closing two lines.

CADMUS

Now they had landed on Cretan soil, when Jupiter dropped
the disguise of a bull, to reveal himself as the god who he
was.
Anxious for news, Európ a's father commanded Cadmus
to search for his kidnapped sister. 'Find her, or go into
exile,'
he said – an iniquitous action, if also inspired by devotion.*
But who can detect Jove's thievish amours? Young Cadmus
wandered
the wide world over, staying away from his country,
avoiding
his father Agénor's wrath. At last he visited Delphi,
and kneeling down he questioned the god: 'What land must
I live in?'
Phoebus replied, 'If you make for the wilds, you will soon
be met
by a cow that has never been yoked or harnessed to draw a
ploughshare.
She is to guide your path, and where she settles for grazing,
found a city with walls and name the region Boeótia.'*
Cadmus had scarcely made the descent from Castália's
cave,*
when he spied a solitary heifer slowly moving forward
without any guard or halter for sign of service to man.
He stalked her closely, following step by step in her wake,
silently praising the god of Delphi who'd shown him the
way.
Once she had crossed the river Cephísus and Pánopeus'
fields,
the animal halted. Lifting her beautiful head with its
spreading
horns to the sky, she filled the air with a lingering low,
and glancing round at the men who were following close
behind her,

sank to the ground and rested her flanks in the fresh-green pasture.
Cadmus knelt to give thanks. He pressed his lips to the alien
earth and greeted the mountains and plains of his new-found land.
Sacrifice now to Jove, he thought. So he sent his companions
in search of water from running springs for ritual libations.
Nearby stood an ancient forest whose trees had never been felled,
a cave in its midst all overgrown with creepers and brushwood.
A structure of rocks created an arch low down, and out of it
water was gushing in streams. Deep down in the heart of the cave
was a dragon sacred to Mars, which flaunted a golden crest,
fiery glinting eyes, a flickering three-forked tongue,
three marshalled ranks of teeth and a body swollen with venom.
Here the Tyrian strangers came on their fateful mission.
They entered the grove and lowered their pitchers to catch the water.
A mighty splash! At once, with a fearsome hissing, down from
the length of the cave there emerged the blue-black head of the dragon.
Stricken with horror, they dropped their vessels, their blood ran cold,
their limbs were suddenly seized with a spasm of violent trembling.
The serpent twisted his scaly spirals along in their slithering
coils, then shot right up in a curve like a huge bow,
towering towards the sky with more than half of his body,

overlooking the wood in a span as extensive as all
the stars of the Snake* between the Great and the Little
Bear.
The poor Phoenícians, whether they drew their swords or
attempted
flight or stood stock still in terror, the monster was on
them,
to crunch them up with his fangs or crush in his strangling
coils,
or else to blast with the venomous filth of his noxious
breath.
By now the sun had reached its zenith and shortened the
shadows.
Wondering what had delayed his companions, the hero
Cadmus
decided to track them down. To shield his body, he
donned
the skin of a lion.* For weapons he took his iron-tipped
spear,
his javelin and, more important than all, the courage to
wield them.
Striding into the wood, he encountered a welter of corpses,
above them the huge-backed monster gloating in grisly
triumph,
tongue bedabbled with blood as he lapped at their pitiful
wounds.
'My faithful comrades,' he cried, 'if I cannot avenge your
death,
at least I can share it!' With that he lifted a massive boulder
up from the ground and hurled it with all the strength of his
arm.
Its violent force would have shaken the walls of a lofty
fortress,
towers and all. The dragon, however, remained unscathed.
His scales protected him well like a coat of mail, and his
blue-black
skin was sufficiently hard to repel the powerful impact –
but not sufficiently hard to counter the pointed javelin,

which flew through the air to lodge in the suppler flesh that enfolded
the monster's sinuous spine, and pierced right down to his flank.
Maddened by pain, the dragon twisted his head behind him,
glared at the wound on his back and bit at the weapon embedded there.
This way and that he struggled to ease the shaft, until he awkwardly wrenched it out; but the point was trapped in his ribcage.
The monster's temper was violent enough by nature; this was
the final whiplash. The veins swelled full on his bloated throat,
his jaws with their poisonous fangs were dribbling with yellow-white foam,
his scales rasped as they scraped the soil, and his hellish mouth,
panting with foul black breath, infected the air with pollution.
See him writhing his coils on the earth to form a voluminous
ring; he then reared up as erect as the tallest treetop;
now on the rampage, he swept along like a swollen river
in full spate, breasting and toppling the trees that blocked his advance.
On his side Cadmus retreated a step, withstanding attack
with his stolen lion skin and holding the menacing jaws at bay
with the point of his outstretched spear. The dragon furiously snapped
at the metal and worried the spearhead between his teeth to no purpose.
By now the blood had started to trickle from out of that venomous

contrast et juxtaposition

throat; the rich green grass was bespattered with deep red gore.
But the wound was far from fatal; the snake could still move clear
and retract his injured neck. By giving ground he prevented
the point being driven home or piercing him any deeper.
At last our hero was able to thrust it into his gullet;
then moving in close, he pressed on it hard, until his retreating
prey backed into an oak and his neck was nailed to the trunk.
The tree bent under the dragon's weight and groaned as the monster
flogged and flailed at its stout old stock with the tip of his tail.

The victor feasted his eyes on the bulk of his vanquished foe.
Suddenly a sound, a voice rang out. Cadmus could not
tell whence it came, but he heard it clearly: 'Son of Agenor,
why do you gaze on a slaughtered snake? You also shall live
as a snake to be gazed on!' Cadmus waited in apprehension,
stunned, white-faced, his hair on end in the chill of terror.
Look now! Gliding down through the ether, his patron goddess
Pallas appeared, with orders for him to turn the soil
and sow the teeth of the dragon as seeds of a race to come.
He did as she bade and after pressing a rut in the earth
with a plough, he scattered the teeth that were destined to grow into men.
At once – amazing to tell – the clods started to crumble;
out of the furrow a line of bristling spear-tips sprouted,
next an array of helmets nodding with colourful plumes,
then manly shoulders and breasts and arms accoutred with weapons
rose from the earth, a burgeoning crop of shielded warriors.
Think of a tapestry frontcloth* rolling up in the theatre

at festival time. The embroidered figures slowly and smoothly
ascend, their faces first and then the rest of their bodies,
till all is revealed and their feet stand firm on the base of the curtain.
Another foe to be feared! When Cadmus made ready to seize
his weapons, 'Leave those arms!' cried one of the troop of earth-sprung
warriors. 'This is a family feud. You stand aside!'
As he spoke he engaged in combat with one of his soil-born brethren
and felled him down with his sword. Then he himself was struck
by a javelin hurled from a distance. His killer survived no longer
and soon had breathed the last of the breath he had just been given.
So madness got hold of them all. Their death was as quick as their birth,
from the wounds they dealt and received in their own unnatural warfare.
Those youths, allotted so brief a span of life, were already
beating the breast of their mother earth, till it bled with their fresh warm
blood. Five soldiers only remained, and one was Echíon.*
He, at Minerva's prompting, threw his arms to the ground
and sued for peace with his brothers, promising peace in return.
These were the men whom Cadmus of Sidon took as his aides
when he founded his city as Phoebus Apollo's oracle bade him.

ACTAEON

Thebes had her walls, and Cadmus' exile might have been thought
to have brought him nothing but luck. He had married Harmónia, daughter
of Mars and Venus, a most prestigious match which had yielded
a brood of numerous sons and daughters and much-loved grandsons,
grown into fine young men. But never forget the ancient saying: 'Wait for the final day. Call no man happy
until he is dead and his body is laid to rest in the grave.'
Prosperous in so much, great Cadmus was struck by disaster.
First, Actaéon, his grandson, had antlers sprout from his brow
and his dogs were allowed to slake their thirst in their master's blood.
If you look at the facts, however, you'll find that chance was the culprit.
No crime was committed. Why punish a man for a pure mistake?*
Picture a mountain stained with the carnage of hounded beasts.
It was now midday, the hour when the shadows draw to their shortest;
the sun god's chariot was halfway over from east to west.
A band of huntsmen was strolling along through the pathless glades,
when their leader, the young Actaeon, calmly made an announcement:
'Comrades, our nets are soaked, our spears are drenched in our quarry's
blood. Our luck is enough for today. When the goddess Aurora

appears tomorrow and shows the gleam of her rosy wheels,
let us all return to the chase. Now Phoebus is halfway over
from east to west and cutting the fields with his burning rays.
Leave off what you're doing and stow your knotted nets for the moment.'
The men did just as he told them and took a break from their hunting.
Now picture a valley, dense with pine and tapering cypress,
called Gargáphië, sacred haunt of the huntress Diana;
there, in a secret corner, a cave surrounded by woodland,
owing nothing to human artifice. Nature had used
her talent to imitate art: she had moulded the living rock
of porous tufa to form the shape of a rugged arch.
To the right, a babbling spring with a thin translucent rivulet
widening into a pool ringed round by a grassy clearing.
Here the goddess who guards the woods, when weary with hunting,
would come to bathe her virginal limbs in the clear, clean water.
On this occasion she made her entrance and handed her javelin,
quiver and slackened bow to the chosen nymph who carried
her weapons. Another put out her arms to receive her dress
as she stripped it off. Two more were removing her boots, while Crócale,
more of an expert, gathered the locks that were billowing over
her mistress' neck in a knot, though her own stayed floating and free.

Néphele, Hýale, Rhamis, Psecas and Phíale charged
their capacious urns with water and stood all ready to pour it.
And while the virgin goddess was taking her bath in her usual
pool, as fate would have it, Actaeon, Cadmus' grandson,
wandered into the glade. His hunting could wait, he thought,
as he sauntered aimlessly through the unfamiliar woodland.
Imagine the scene as he entered: the grotto, the splashing fountains,
the group of nymphs in the nude. At once, at the sight of a man,
they struck their bosoms in horror, their sudden screams re-echoing
through the encircling woods. They clustered around Diana
to form a screen with their bodies, but sadly the goddess was taller;
her neck and shoulders were visible over the heads of her maidens.
Think of the crimson glow on the clouds when struck by the rays
of the setting sun; or think of the rosy-fingered dawn;
such was the blush on the face of Diana observed quite naked.
Although her companion nymphs had formed a barrier round her,
she stood with her front turned sideways and looked at the rash intruder
over her shoulder. She wished that her arrows were ready to hand,
but used what she could, caught up some water and threw it into
the face of the man. As she splashed his hair with revengeful drops,
she spoke the spine-chilling words which warned of impending disaster:

'Now you may tell the story of seeing Diana naked –
If story-telling is in your power!' No more was needed.
The head she had sprinkled sprouted the horns of a lusty stag;
the neck expanded, the ears were narrowed to pointed tips;
she changed his hands into hooves and his arms into long and slender
forelegs; she covered his frame in a pelt of dappled buckskin;
last, she injected panic. The son of Autónoë* bolted,
surprising himself with his speed as he bounded away from the clearing.
But when he came to a pool and set eyes on his head and antlers,
'Oh, dear god!' he was going to say; but no words followed.
All the sound he produced was a moan, as the tears streamed over
his strange new face. It was only his feelings that stayed unchanged.
What could he do? Make tracks for his home in the royal palace?
Or hide in the woodlands? Each was precluded by shame or fear.
He wavered in fearful doubt. And then his dogs caught sight of him.
First to sound on the trail were Blackfoot and sharp-nosed Tracker* –
Tracker of Cretan breed and Blackfoot a Spartan pointer.
Others came bounding behind them, fast as the gusts of the storm wind:
Ravenous, Mountain-Ranger, Gazelle, his Arcadian deerhounds;
powerful Fawnkiller, Hunter the fierce, and violent Hurricane;

Wingdog, fleetest of foot, and Chaser, the keenest-scented;
savage Sylvan, lately gashed by the tusks of a wild boar;
Glen who was dropped from a wolf at birth, and the bitch who gathers
the flocks in, Shepherdess; Harpy, flanked by her two young puppies;
River, the dog from Sicyon, sides all taut and contracted;
Racer and Gnasher; Spot, with Tigress and muscular Valour;
Sheen with a snow-white coat and murky Soot with a pitch-black;
Spartan, wiry and tough; then Whirlwind, powerful pursuer;
Swift, and Wolfcub racing along with her Cypriot brother;
Grabber, who sported an ivory patch midway on his ebony
forehead; Sable, and Shag with a coat like a tangled thicket;
two mongrel hounds from a Cretan sire and Lacónian dam,
Rumpus and Whitefang; Yelper, whose howls could damage the eardrums –
and others too many to mention. Spoiling all for their quarry,
over crag, over cliff, over rocks which appeared to allow no approach,
where access was hard and where there was none, the whole pack followed.
Actaeon fled where so many times he had been the pursuer.
He fled from the dogs who had served him so faithfully, longing to shout to them,
'Stop! It is I, Actaeon, your master. Do you not know me?'
But the words would not come. The air was filled with relentless baying.
Blacklock first inserted his teeth to tear at his back;
Beast-killer next; then Mountain-Boy latched on to his shoulder.
These had started out later but stolen a march by taking

a short cut over the ridge. As they pinned their master down,
the rest of the pack rushed round and buried their fangs in his body,
until it was covered with crimson wounds. Actaeon groaned
in a sound that was scarcely human but one no stag could ever
have made, as he filled the familiar hills with his cries of anguish.
Then bending his legs like a cringing beggar, he gazed all round
with his silently pleading eyes, as if they were outstretched arms.
What of his friends? In ignorant zeal they encouraged the wild pack
on with the usual halloos. They scanned the woods for their leader,
shouting, 'Actaeon! Actaeon!', as if he were far away,
though he moved his head in response to his name.
'Why aren't you here,
you indolent man, to enjoy the sight of this heaven-sent prize?'
If only he'd not been there! But he was. He would dearly have loved
to watch, instead of enduring, his own dogs' vicious performance.
Crowding around him, they buried their noses inside his flesh
and mangled to pieces the counterfeit stag who embodied their master.
Only after his life was destroyed in a welter of wounds
is Diana, the goddess of hunting, said to have cooled her anger.

SEMELE

Comments varied: some felt that the goddess had overdone
her violent revenge, while others commended it – worthy,
they said
of her strict virginity. All were prepared to defend their
opinion.
Juno alone was less concerned to publish her judgment,
whether in praise or blame, but quietly gloated over
the blow to Agenor's house. Her hatred for princess
Europa,
the whore of Tyre, was now transferred to her kinsfolk.
Suddenly,
further cause for resentment: Sémele, Cadmus' daughter,
was pregnant by mighty Jove! Queen Juno's tongue was
already
sharpened, when 'What has my scolding ever achieved?' she
thought.
'I must target the woman herself and destroy her, if I am to
merit
the title of mighty Juno; if I may properly wield
my jewelled sceptre as Queen of the Gods; if I am Jupiter's
sister and consort – at least his sister! She might, I suppose,
be content with a secret liaison; the insult to *me* may be
shortlived.
But no, she has got herself pregnant! Her guilt is betrayed
by her bulging
belly. So sure of her beauty, she means to become a mother
by none but Jupiter. How many times have *I* been allowed
to bear him a child?* I'll make quite sure that he plays her
false.
Her Jove will drown her in the Styx, or I'm not Saturn's
daughter!'
She rose from her throne, then, veiling herself in a
yellowish cloud,

she came to Semele's house and only emerged from her cover
after assuming the form of a crone with whitened temples,
wrinkles lining her skin, bent back and tottering legs.
Adopting an old cracked voice, she quickly appeared in the spitting
image of Beroë, Semele's old Epidaúrian nurse.
Well now, they started to gossip and during a lengthy discussion
Jupiter's name came up. Then 'Béroë' said with a sigh,
'I hope it is Jove for certain; but everything makes me uneasy.
Hundreds of men have claimed to be gods, in order to take
young virgins to bed. It isn't enough to *say* that he's Jove.
If his godhead is genuine, make him give you a pledge of his love.
Ask him to take you in all the majestic splendour he shows
when he comes to the arms of Juno, dressed in his full regalia!'
Semele's unsuspecting mind was already persuaded
by Juno's suggestion. She then asked Jupiter, 'Please will you give me
whatever I ask for?' 'Choose!' he replied. 'I'll refuse you nothing.
To back my promise, I call on the power of the River Styx,
the god whom all the other gods fear, to witness my oath!'
Joyful in ruin, with too much power for her good, and destined
to die because of her lover's devotion, Semele said to him,
'Come to my bed as you come to your wife, when Juno embraces

your body divine in the pact of Venus!' Jupiter wanted
to gag her lips, but the fatal words had already been
uttered.
Neither her wish nor his solemn oath could now be
retracted.
And so, with a heavy sigh and a heavier heart, he ascended
the heights of the sky. As his face grew dark, the mists
closed round him;
he gathered his threatening clouds, the gales with the
flashing lightning,
the rumbling thunder and fearful bolts that none can
escape.
But he did whatever he could to lessen his violent impact.
The flaming bolt with which he had hurtled the
hundred-headed
Typhon to earth was left on the shelf, too deadly to use.
Instead he seized a less heavy weapon ('his everyday
missile',
they call it in heaven), forged by the Cyclopes, giant smiths,
to be less fiery and fierce, less charged with the power of his
anger.
Armed with this he entered the palace of Cadmus; but
Semele's
mortal frame was unable to take the celestial onslaught.
His bridal gift was to set her ablaze. The baby,* still
in the foetal stage, was ripped from her womb, and, strange
as it seems,
survived to complete his mother's term stitched up in his
father's
thigh. At first the child was secretly reared by Semele's
sister Ino. She handed him on to the nymphs of Nysa,
who hid him away in their private cave and fed him on
milk.

TEIRESIAS

While these events, in accordance with fate, were occurring on earth
and the infant Bacchus, now twice-born, was cradled in safety,
the story goes that Jupiter once, well-flushed with nectar,
laid his worries aside and, as Juno was none too busy,
he casually cracked a joke. 'Now listen,' he said, 'I bet
you women enjoy more pleasure in bed than ever we men do.'
When Juno disputed the point, they agreed to ask the opinion
of wise Teirésias, since he'd experienced love from both angles.
How so? When a pair of enormous snakes in the leafy forest
were coupling together, a blow from his staff disrupted their congress.
Teiresias then was somewhat amazingly changed from a man
to a woman for seven years. In the eighth, however, he saw
the very same snakes again and said, 'If cudgelling you
has the power to alter the sex of the person who deals you the wallop,
here is a second one for you!' With that, he struck at the snakes
and promptly recovered the figure and bodily parts he was born with.
That was why he was chosen to settle this playful argument.
Jupiter won his bet, but Juno unfairly resented
Teiresias' verdict. They say that in disproportionate fury,

she sentenced her judge and condemned his eyes to perpetual
blindness.
What of almighty Jove? As the gods are never allowed
to undo each other's work, for the loss of Teiresias' sight
he awarded the gift of clairvoyance and high prestige to
console him.

NARCISSUS AND ECHO

Soon the prophet's fame was rumoured throughout
Boeotia.
Folk consulted, and none could fault, his oracular powers.
The first to put his trusted authority under test
was sea-green Líriope,* whom once Cephisus the river-god
caught in the folds of his sinuous stream and then
proceeded
to rape. The nymph's womb swelled and, now at her very
loveliest,
Liriope gave birth to a child, already adorable,
called Narcíssus. In course of time she consulted the seer;
'Tell me,' she asked, 'will my baby live to a ripe old age?'
'Yes,' he replied, 'so long as he never knows himself'* –
empty words, as they long appeared, but the prophet was
proved right.
In the event, Narcissus died of a curious passion.
Sixteen years went by and already the son of Cephisus
was changing each day from beautiful youth to comely
manhood.
Legions of lusty men and bevies of girls desired him;
but the heart was so hard and proud in that soft and slender
body,
that none of the lusty men or languishing girls could
approach him.
One day he was sighted, blithely chasing the scampering
roebuck
into the huntsman's nets, by a nymph whose babbling voice

would always answer a call but never speak first. It was
Echo.
Echo still was a body, not a mere voice, but her
chattering
tongue could only do what it does today, that is
to parrot the last few words of the many spoken by
others.
Juno had done this to her. The goddess would be all
ready
to catch her husband Jupiter making love to some
nymph
in a mountain dell, when crafty Echo would keep her
engaged
in a long conversation, until the nymph could scurry to
safety.
When Saturn's daughter perceived what Echo was
doing, she said to her,
'I've been cheated enough by your prattling tongue.
From now on
your words will be short and sweet!' Her curse took
effect at once.
Echo could only repeat the words she heard at the end
of a sentence and never reply for herself. So when
she saw Narcissus wandering over the country fields,
she burned with desire and stealthily followed along
his tracks.
The closer she followed, the flames of her passion grew
nearer and nearer,
as sulphur smeared on the tip of a pine-torch quickly
catches
fire when another flame is brought into close
proximity.
Oh, how often she longed, poor creature, to say sweet
nothings
and beg him softly to stay! But her nature imposed a
block
and would not allow her to make a start. She was
merely permitted

and ready to wait for the sounds which her voice could return to the speaker.
Narcissus once took a different path from his trusty companions.
'Is anyone there?' he said. '. . . one there?' came Echo's answer.
Startled, he searched with his eyes all round the glade and loudly
shouted, 'Come here!' 'Come here!' the voice threw back to the caller.
He looks behind him and, once again, when no one emerges,
'Why are you running away?' he cries. His words come ringing
back. His body freezes. Deceived by his voice's reflection,
the youth calls out yet again, 'This way! We must come together.'
Echo with rapturous joy responds, 'We must come together!'
To prove her words, she burst in excitement out of the forest,
arms outstretched to fling them around the shoulders she yearned for.
Shrinking in horror, he yelled, 'Hands off! May I die before
you enjoy my body.' Her only reply was '. . . enjoy my body.'
Scorned and rejected, with burning cheeks, she fled to the forest
to hide her shame and live thenceforward in lonely caves.
But her love persisted and steadily grew with the pain of rejection.
Wretched and sleepless with anguish, she started to waste away.
Her skin grew dry and shrivelled, the lovely bloom of her flesh
lost all its moisture; nothing remained but voice and bones;
then only voice, for her bones (so they say) were transformed to stone.

Buried away in the forest, seen no more on the mountains,
heard all over the world, she survives in the sound of the echo.

Not only Echo, the other nymphs of the waves and mountains
incurred Narcissus' mockery; so did his male companions.
Finally one of his scorned admirers lifted his hands
to the heavens: 'I pray Narcissus may fall in love and never
obtain his desire!' His prayer was just and Némesis heard it.
Picture a clear, unmuddied pool of silvery, shimmering
water. The shepherds have not been near it; the mountain-goats
and cattle have not come down to drink there; its surface has never
been ruffled by bird or beast or branch from a rotting cypress.
Imagine a ring of grass, well-watered and lush, and a circle
of trees for cooling shade in the burning summer sunshine.
Here Narcissus arrived, all hot and exhausted from hunting,
and sank to the ground. The place looked pleasant, and here was a spring!
Thirsty for water, he started to drink, but soon grew thirsty
for something else. His being was suddenly overwhelmed
by a vision of beauty. He fell in love with an empty hope,
a shadow mistaken for substance. He gazed at himself in amazement,

limbs and expression as still as a statue of Párian marble.
Stretched on the grass, he saw twin stars, his own two eyes,
rippling curls like the locks of a god, Apollo or Bacchus,
cheeks as smooth as silk, an ivory neck and a glorious
face with a mixture of blushing red and a creamy whiteness.
All that his lovers adored he worshipped in self-adoration.
Blindly rapt with desire for himself, he was votary and idol,
suitor and sweetheart, taper and fire – at one and the same time.
Those beautiful lips would implore a kiss, but as he bent forward
the pool would always betray him. He plunges his arms in the water
to clasp that ivory neck and finds himself clutching at no one.
He knows not what he is seeing; the sight still fires him with passion.
His eyes are deceived, but the strange illusion excites his senses.
Trusting fool, how futile to woo a fleeting phantom!
You'll never grasp it. Turn away and your love will have vanished.
The shape now haunting your sight is only a wraith, a reflection
consisting of nothing; there with you when you arrived, here now,
and there with you when you decide to go – if ever you can go!
Nothing could drag him away from the place, not hunger for food
nor need for sleep. As he lay stretched out in the grassy shade,
he never could gaze his fill on that fraudulent image of beauty;
and gazing proved his demise. He raised his body a little,
then stretching his arms in grief to the witnessing trees all round him,

'Wise old trees,' he exclaimed, 'has anyone loved more cruelly?
Lovers have often kissed in secret under your branches.
Here you have stood for hundreds of years. In all that time
has anyone suffered for love like me? Whom can you remember?
I've looked and have longed. But looking and longing is far from enough.
I still have to find!' (His lover's delusion was overpowering.)
'My pain is the more since we're not divided by stretches of ocean,
unending roads, by mountains or walls with impassable gates.
All that keeps us apart is a thin, thin line of water.
He wants to be held in my arms. Whenever I move to kiss
the clear bright surface, his upturned face strains closer to mine.
We all but touch! The paltriest barrier thwarts our pleasure.
Come out to me here, whoever you are! Why keep eluding me,
peerless boy? When I seek you, where do you steal away?
It can't be my looks or my age which makes you want to avoid me;
even the nymphs have longed to possess me! . . . Your looks of affection
offer a grain of hope. When my arms reach out to embrace you,
you reach out too. I smile at you, and you smile at me back.
I weep and your tears flow fast. You nod when I show my approval.
When I read those exquisite lips, I can watch them gently repeating

my words – but I never can *hear* you repeat them! . . . . .
I know you now and I know myself.* Yes, I am the cause
of the fire inside me, the fuel that burns and the flame that
lights it.
What can I do? Must I woo or be wooed? What else can I
plead for?
All I desire I have. My wealth has left me a pauper.
Oh, how I wish that I and my body could now be parted,
I wish my love were not here! – a curious prayer for a lover.
Now my sorrow is sapping my strength. My life is almost
over. Its candle is guttering out in the prime of my
manhood.
Death will be easy to bear, since dying will cure my
heartache.
Better indeed if the one I love could have lived for longer,
but now, two soulmates in one, we shall face our ending
together.'
With that he turned distractedly back to his own
reflection;
his tears were troubling the limpid waters and blurring the
picture
that showed in the ruffled pool. When he saw it fast
disappearing,
'Don't hurry away, please stay! You cannot desert me so
cruelly.
I love you!' he shouted. 'Please, if I'm not able to touch you,
I must be allowed to see you, to feed my unhappy passion!'
In wild distress he ripped the top of his tunic aside
and bared his breast to the blows he rained with his
milk-white hand.
His fist brought up a crimson weal on his naked torso,
like apples tinted both white and red, or a multi-coloured
cluster of grapes just ripening into a blushing purple.
Once the water had cleared again and he saw what his
hand
had done, the boy could bear it no longer. As yellow wax
melts in a gentle flame, or the frost on a winter morning
thaws in the rays of the sunshine, so Narcissus faded

away and melted, slowly consumed by the fire inside him.
His face had lost that wonderful blend of red and whiteness,
gone was the physical vigour and all he had looked at and longed for,
broken the godlike frame which once poor Echo had worshipped.
Echo had watched his decline, still filled with angry resentment
but moved to pity. Whenever the poor unhappy youth
uttered a pitiful sigh, her own voice uttered a pitiful
sigh in return. When he beat with his hand on his shoulders, she also
mimicked the sound of the blows. His final words, as he gazed
once more in the pool, rang back from the rocks: 'Oh marvellous boy,
I loved you in vain!' Then he said, 'Farewell.'
'Farewell,' said Echo.
He rested his weary head in the fresh green grass, till Death's hand
gently closed his eyes still rapt with their master's beauty.
Even then, as he crossed the Styx to ghostly Hades,
he gazed at himself in the river. At once his sister naiads
beat their breasts and cut their tresses in mourning tribute;
the dryads wailed their lament; and Echo re-echoed their wailing.
A pyre was raised, the bier made ready, the funeral torches
brandished on high. The body, however, was not to be found –
only a flower with a trumpet of gold and pale white petals.

PENTHEUS AND BACCHUS (1)

Once this story was bruited abroad, Teiresias' credit
spread through the townships of Greece, as a prophet of high reputation.
One single person, however, was found to reject him – Péntheus,*
son of Echion, who treated the gods with contempt and scoffed at
the seer's forewarnings. 'You blind old fool,' he cruelly taunted,
'Lost in the dark!' Then, shaking his frost-white locks, Teiresias
answered the king, 'How lucky you'd be if you were deprived
like me of your sight and could never set eyes on the mysteries of Bacchus!
The day will dawn, which I can foretell is not far off,
when a new god comes, the son of your kinswoman Semele, Liber.*
Unless you pay him his rightful tribute of shrine and temple,
your mangled corpse will be strewn in a thousand places, polluting
the woods with your blood, polluting your mother and her two sisters.
So it shall be. You will surely deny that godhead his worship
and surely complain that my darkened eyes saw only too well!'
The words were spoken and Pentheus rudely flung the man out.
But the words proved true and Teiresias' prophecies came to fulfilment.
Bacchus arrived and the countryside rang with ecstatic cries.
The crowds poured in; there were mothers and wives with their sons and husbands,

nobles and ordinary folk, swept up in the strange new rituals.
'Children of Mars, have you all gone crazy?' Pentheus harangued them.
'Blood of the dragon's teeth, you're possessed! Are you so spellbound
by curling pipes of animal horn and clashing cymbals
to fall for this juggler's tricks? You, who were never dismayed
by the threatening swords of the foe on the march or his blaring trumpets,
are now being worsted by screaming women, bibulous frenzy,
lewd and lecherous hordes and the futile banging of drums!
Elders, how can I respect you? You ventured across the ocean
to found a new Tyre* and establish a home for your household gods.
Is Thebes to be captured without a fight? You younger citizens,
sharper in spirit, my own peers, you should be bearing arms,
not a thyrsus.* Your heads should be covered by helmets, not wreaths of ivy.
Remember, I beg you, the dragon's teeth from which you were sprung.
On his own the dragon destroyed a throng. Now muster that dragon
spirit again! The serpent died for a pool and a fountain –
you are defending your own good name. Defend it and conquer!
The dragon's part was to kill brave settlers. Yours is to banish
effeminate eunuchs and save your inherited honour. If Thebes

is destined to perish so soon, I pray that its walls may be toppled
by missiles and men in the clashing of swords and the crackle of flames.
Wretched but guiltless, we might be compelled to bemoan our lot
but not to conceal it. Tears would never be mingled with blushes.
Now, though, our city of Thebes will fall to a weaponless boy,
not in war or backed by a host of spearmen and charging cavalry.
His gleaming armour is perfumed locks and womanish garlands,
purple dresses richly woven with golden embroidery.
Leave him to me – you keep to the side – I'll force the truth out of him:
Jupiter isn't his father and all these rites are a fraud.
If King Acrísius* found the courage to spurn this spurious
deity and close the gates of Argos against him, can Pentheus
with all the city of Thebes be scared of a wandering stranger?
Off with you quickly, slaves, and bring this evil influence
here to me now in chains. No dawdling, this is an order!'
Everyone remonstrated with Pentheus: his grandfather Cadmus,
Áthamas and the rest of his friends. But their efforts to calm him
were wasted. Warning merely sharpened his purpose; constraint
provoked him to wilder madness and aggravated his fury –
as swollen rivers that I have seen,* where nothing obtruded
to hinder their course, proceeded smoothly with little commotion;
but when they were blocked by uprooted trees or rocky boulders,

they foamed and they seethed and their rage gathered force in the face of obstruction.
There! the slaves had returned, all covered in blood. 'Where's Bacchus?'
their master asked. 'We never saw Bacchus,' the men replied,
'but we've captured one of his band who serves the cult as an acolyte.
This is the wretch.' And they handed over a prisoner whose arms
were pinioned behind his back, a bacchic disciple of Lydian
origin. Pentheus fixed his awesomely furious gaze
on the man. He found it hard to postpone the demise of his victim,
but said, 'Your life is forfeit, my friend, and your death can teach others
a lesson. First, though, tell me your name and the names of your parents.
Where is your home, and why do you practise this new religion?'

ACOETES AND THE LYDIAN SAILORS

Cool and fearless, the stranger replied, 'My name is Acoétes,
my country Maeónia. My parents were humble and simple folk.
My father left me no fields to be ploughed by sturdy oxen,
flocks of sheep to yield wool, or herds of cattle for farming.
Poor like me, he would use his angler's line and hook
to entice the fish and land his catch as it danced on the rod.
My father's skill was his whole estate. As he lay on his deathbed,

"My boy," he said, "I bequeath you the art which is all I possess.
You are my heir and successor in that." So what was my legacy?
Nothing, except for a stretch of water, to call my inheritance.
As time went by, I tired of treading the same old rocks
and learned a new skill, to steer a ship by plying a tiller.
I practised observing the stars: the rainy constellation
they know as the Goat, the Pleíades, Hýades, Arctus the Great Bear.
I studied the changing winds and where I could find good harbours.
'One day, on a voyage to Delos, my ship was brought by the wind
to the island of Chios. By skilful rowing we made the shore,
jumped out of the boat and planted our feet in the squelchy sand.
There we remained for the night. As soon as the red dawn started
to glow in the east, I rose and ordered my crew to take on
fresh water, indicating the path which led to a spring.
For myself I mounted a look-out point to check the direction
the wind was blowing, then called to my men as I made my way back
on board. "All present, cap'n!" responded the mate Ophéltes,
leading along the shore what he thought was a prize he had won
in a lonely meadow, a boy with a beautiful face like a girl's.
Their captive appeared to be staggering and struggling behind in a drowsy,
drunken stupor. I looked at his dress, his face and his movements.
Nothing I saw suggested the form of a mortal creature.
Sensing this, I said to my crew, "Some god inhabits this body,

I don't know who, but a holy presence is surely there.
O spirit divine, whoever you be, be gracious and prosper
our ventures! I pray you to pardon these men." "Don't bother to pray
For *us*!" said Dictys, the nimblest sailor in scaling the topmost
yard and sliding down to the deck with his hands on a stay.
"Hear, hear!" barked Libys, "Hear, hear!" joined in Melánthus the lookout;
Alcímedon backed them; so did the master oarsman, Epópeus,
who called the time for the rowers and rallied their spirits as needed;
and so did the rest of the crew. How blind is the lust for plunder!
"I'm in command of this ship," I said. "I cannot allow it
to come to harm because it is bearing a god on board."
Placing myself on the gangway, I faced the fury of Lýcabas,
the worst of my crew for reckless violence, a Lydian outlaw
reaping his just deserts for a brutal murder in exile.
As I stood my ground, he landed a powerful punch on my throat
and all but sent me reeling into the water, had I not
dazedly managed to cling to a rope which prevented my falling.
My impious crew cheered Lycabas on. Then at long last Bacchus
(for Bacchus it truly was), as though the uproar had banished
his drowsy demeanour and fully restored his befuddled senses,
said, "What are you doing? What does this shouting mean? Please tell me,

sailors, how have I come here? Where are you plotting to take me?"
"No need to be scared," said Próreus. "Give us the name of the harbour
you want to make, and we'll put you ashore wherever you ask."
"Naxos," Liber replied. "Please set your course towards Naxos.
That's where my home is. Sure, they'll make you welcome in Naxos."
Those treacherous ruffians swore by the ocean and all its gods
that so it would be and told me to get the ship under way.
Now, Naxos lay to the right. I was setting the sails to starboard,
when each of them, one by one, came up and angrily whispered
(though most of them made their meaning apparent by nods and winks),
"Acoetes, you fool, what the hell are you up to? Steer to port, man!"
I was aghast and answered, "Somebody take the helm!
I refuse to use my skill to further a wicked crime."
And now the whole troop of them, mutinously growling, railed against me.
"I suppose our safety depends on no one but you!" Aethálion
quipped, as he boldly advanced to take my place at the tiller
and steer the ship in a different direction, away from Naxos.
'Now the god had his turn to mock. As though he had just
seen through the deception, he looked out over the sea from the curving
stern and pretended to weep. "This is not where you promised to land me,
sailors," he whimpered. "I never asked you to bring me here!

What crime are you making me pay for? What credit does this do *you*,
a gang of grown men, to play such a trick on a solitary boy?"
Meanwhile I had long been weeping myself; but my evil companions
laughed at my tears and quickened the stroke as they bent to their oars.
And now I swear to you, sir, by the god himself (no other
god is more present than he is), the story you hear from my lips
is as true as it beggars belief: the vessel then stood stock still
in the surge and swell of the waves, as though it were resting in dry dock.
Puzzled, the sailors continued to lash the sea with their oars
and all the sails were unfurled as they struggled by these two means
to keep the ship moving. Their oars, however, were tangled with ivy,*
which spiralled upward in creeping tendrils until it bedecked
the sails in luxuriant clusters. And there was Bacchus himself,
his forehead adorned with a garland of ripening bunches of grapelets,
waving a spear emblazoned with vine leaves; lying around him
a mirage of savage tigers, lynxes and spotted panthers.
'The sailors leapt to their feet, impelled by madness or terror –
it matters not which. Then fate struck Medon first: the whole
of his body began to go black and his spinal cord to bend

in the curve of a bow. "What incredible shape are you
turning into?"
Lycabas asked him. Whilst he was speaking, his own mouth
widened,
his nose protruded and all of his skin grew hard and
scaly.*
Libys in turn was trying to ship his entangled oars,
when he saw that his hands were suddenly shrinking away,
until
they couldn't be called his hands any longer, but only his
fins.
Another tried to secure his arms on the twisted ropes,
but he had no arms; with a dolphin's limbless body and
turned-up
snout he plunged down into the waves, and the end of his
tail
was curved like a sickle or like the horns of a crescent
moon.
Everywhere now they were jumping clear to be drenched in
the salt spray;
up they would surface again, then dive back down to the
depths,
frolicking gaily like dancers, wantonly tossing their bodies,
spreading their nostrils to shoot the seawater fountaining
upwards.
Moments before, there were twenty sailors aboard that
vessel;
I was the sole survivor, shivering and quivering with terror,
almost out of my mind. But the god's voice filled me with
courage:
"Away with your fears, hold course for Naxos!" As soon
as I landed,
I joined the rites of Bacchus and serve in his holy mysteries.'

PENTHEUS AND BACCHUS (2)

Pentheus broke in: 'I've listened for long enough to this rambling
saga. By playing for time he is hoping to soften my anger.
Guards, be off with him quickly! Straight to the torture-chamber!
Rack his body, then cast it down into Stygian darkness!'
At once the Lydian Acoetes was violently dragged away
and immured in a thick-walled dungeon. And while the men were preparing
the cruel instruments, iron and fire, for his execution,
the story goes that, as if by magic, the doors flew open,
and the shackles dropped from the prisoner's arms of their own accord.
Pentheus remained unshaken. He gave no further instructions,
but went for himself to Mount Cithaéron, the bacchanals' chosen
haunt for their rites and a resonant bowl for their jubilant cries.
As a spirited war-horse snorts on the trumpeter's braying call
for the battle charge to begin and champs at the bit in excitement,
so Pentheus was roused when the sky re-echoed the maenads' drawn-out
shrieks of joy, and the noise in his ears refuelled his anger.
Halfway up the mountainside was a treeless plateau,
edged by a circle of woods and open to view all round.
Here, as Pentheus profanely spied on the sacred rituals,
who saw him first? Who rushed on him first in maniacal frenzy?

And who first launched her thyrsus to savage her own dear son?
His mother Agáve. 'Watch me, sisters,' she shouted, 'both of you!
Look at the huge wild boar there wandering over our meadow.
That boar must be mine to spear!' He was all alone, but the whole band
charged him in fury. Massing together and screaming, they chased
their quarry, frightened at last and using less threatening language,
at last condemning himself and admitting his impious wrongdoing.
Wounded, poor wretch, he could still appeal to his mother's sister:
'Autonoë, help me! Actaeon's ghost* is pleading for mercy!'
Actaeon's name meant nothing to her. She wrenched her suppliant's
right arm off, as Ino seized and pulled at the left.
Their luckless nephew had no more arms to extend to his mother.
All he could show was the wounded stumps of his sundered limbs
as he yelled out, 'Look at me, mother!' Agave stared at him, uttered
a wild shriek, violently shaking her neck and tossing her hair,
then twisted his head right off. Displaying it high* in her blood-drenched
fingers, she shouted, 'Joy, my companions! Victory is ours!'
As fast as the leaves in autumn are stripped by the wind off a tall tree
after the first frost, when they can scarcely cling to the branches,
so Pentheus' members were rent apart by those guilty hands.

Warned by these signs, the Theban women practised
the new god's
Mysteries and worshipped before his altars with
offerings of incense.

BOOK 4

The destruction of Pentheus has brought all Thebes under the sway of Bacchus, affirmed by the elaborate recitation of his names and attributes (11–30). The only remaining resistance comes from *The Daughters of Minyas* (1–54), who stick firmly with the normal women's tasks of spinning and weaving, associated with the goddess Minerva, which others have abandoned. To pass the time, the three daughters take it in turns to tell stories, all involving a metamorphosis and all with some kind of love interest:

1. Shakespeare's hilarious parody of *Pyramus and Thisbe* (55–166) in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is so well known that it is hard to be sure that Ovid's original is to be taken seriously. It may perhaps be interpreted as a sad, even touching, story of two star-crossed lovers like Romeo and Juliet – though one has to disregard the grotesque waterpipe simile when Pyramus stabs himself.

2. The atmosphere is certainly more mirthful in the Homeric *Mars and Venus* (167–89). This quickly leads on to *Leucothoë and Clytië* (190–273), where the theme of the gods' spiteful revenge, already sounded in Book 3, is further developed and the amorous sun god emerges with little credit.

3. *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus* (274–388) is the most titillatingly erotic story in the poem, and the predator for once is female. Its entertainment value is high and might be enhanced in recitation if Alcithoë, the sister who tells it, is delicately characterized.

The 'frame' of the preceding stories is completed when *The Daughters of Minyas* (389–415) have their looms covered with ivy and vines (Bacchus prevailing over Minerva) and they themselves are transformed into bats. The mysterious atmosphere of this passage is particularly good.

Spiteful revenge is very much the theme of *Ino and Athamas* (416–562), with its distinctly grim and macabre tone. Juno, still angry with Thebes because of Jupiter's affair with Semele (3.253 ff.), decides to destroy Ino, the only one of Cadmus' daughters who has not been compelled to suffer. This motivates her descent to Hades, with Ovid's magnificent *ecphrasis* (432–46) and his account of the underworld's inhabitants (447–63), where he must be alluding to Book 6 of Virgil's *Aeneid*. The rest of this vividly told but gruesome story speaks for itself.

The myths connected with Thebes, which were started at the beginning of Book 3, are rounded off in *Cadmus and Harmonia* (563–603). The metamorphosis of old Cadmus into a snake picks up Minerva's prophecy at the end of the hero's fight as a young man with the dragon (3.97–9), and there is a consoling tenderness in the strange detail.

By a very contrived transition (see note on 607) Ovid takes us on from the Theban legend to the story of *Perseus* (604–803), the hero renowned above all for his decapitation of the snake-haired Gorgon, Medusa. The grander epic tone returns for Perseus' confrontation with Atlas (621–62), and then for the rescue of the princess Andromeda in his fight with the sea-monster (663–739). A quieter passage (740–52) follows on the origin of coral, leading on to the rites connected with the wedding of Perseus and Andromeda (753–64). This provides a setting for Perseus to narrate how he killed the Gorgon (765–86) and how Medusa had acquired the snakes in her hair (787–803). The book ends, interestingly, with a powerful image of Minerva in her Gorgon-adorned aegis. In the poetic scheme, the goddess has redeemed her defeat by Bacchus.

THE DAUGHTERS OF MINYAS (1)

Only a handful of women rejected the revels of Bacchus.
One was Alcíthoë, Mínyas' daughter, foolhardy enough
to deny that the god was Jupiter's son; and her impious sisters
shared this wicked belief. Now orders had come from the priest
for a solemn festival: ladies and serving-women were therefore
excused from their household duties; all were to wear the fawnskin,
take off their headbands, garland their hair and carry the leaf-tipped
thyrsus; the wrath of the god would be dire against any who slighted him.
So the seer proclaimed. Obediently mothers and young wives
left their looms and baskets of wool with their tasks unfinished.
Burning incense, they called on the god by his different titles:*
Bacchus, the Spirit of Thunder, Lightning-Born, the Releaser,
twice-begotten and only child of two mothers,* Mount Nysa's
Nursling, Thýone's* unshorn son; the God of the Winepress,
Planter of grapes which delight the heart, and the Lord of the Night-Dance;
Father of revels and cries ecstatic, Mystic Iácchus,*
and all the other numberless names which Liber is known by
throughout the cities of Greece. For yours indeed is unperishing
youth and eternal boyhood. You have the comeliest form

of all the gods on Olympus, a face in your hornless epiphany*
fair as a virgin girl's. The East is under your sway
as far as the end of the world where the Ganges waters the land
of the swarthy Indians. You, dread god, have punished Péntheus
for his impiety, punished Lycúrgus who wielded his two-edged
axe; and you cast the Lydian sailors* into the sea.
The car which you proudly drive is drawn by a pair of lynxes,
splendidly harnessed in gaudy straps. Your train is composed
of bacchants and satyrs with old Silénus, drunk and supporting
his battered legs on a stick or uncertainly clutching the sides
of a crook-backed donkey. Wherever you go on your glorious progress,
the shouts of the young attend you, the screams of women, the banging
of tambourines, the skirling of pipes and the clashing of cymbals.
'Lord, in your gentle mercy be with us!' the Theban women
prayed as they duly worshipped; only the daughters of Minyas
stayed indoors and marred the feast with their untoward housecraft,
drawing the wool into thread and twisting the strands with their thumbs,
or moving close to the loom and keeping their servants occupied.
One of the daughters, while deftly spinning, advanced a suggestion:
'While others are idle and fondly observing their so-called festival,

we are detained by Minerva,* who better deserves our attention.
But why don't we also relieve the toil of our hands by telling
stories of different kinds and take it in turns to speak,
while the rest of us quietly listen? The time will go by more quickly.'
Her sisters approved the idea and asked her to tell the first story.
Then she pondered which of the many tales* that she knew
was the best one to choose: perhaps the story of Babylonian
Dércetis, goddess whose body was changed to a scale-covered fish,
now swimming about in a lake, as the people of Palestine think?
Or ought she to tell how Dercetis' daughter* acquired her wings
and passed her declining years perched up in a white-painted dovecote?
Or how a naiad made use of her spells and exceedingly potent
herbs to turn the bodies of youths into voiceless fishes,
until she was changed to a fish herself? Or should she relate
the tale of the mulberry tree, which used to produce white fruit
but was stained with blood and came to burgeon with dark red berries?
This was the story she chose, because it was less familiar;
and thus she began, as the thread whirled round on the twisting spindle.

PYRAMUS AND THISBE

'The tale of Pýramus, known as a youth of exceptional beauty,
and Thisbe, by far the loveliest maiden in all the East.
They lived on adjoining estates in the lofty city of Babylon,

ringed, as they tell, with its walls of brick by Queen Semíramis.
Neighbourhood made for acquaintance and planted the seeds of friendship
which time matured into love. They'd have been united in marriage,
had not their fathers opposed it. But feelings may not be forbidden;
their hearts belonged to each other and burned with an equal passion.
No one was in their confidence; nods and gestures the only
means of conversing; the closer their secret, the stronger the flame.
'The walls that divided the two estates had a tiny hole,
a cranny formed long ago at the time the partition was built.
In the course of the years, this imperfection had never been noticed;
but what is not sensed by love? The lovesick pair were the first
to find it, and used it to channel their whispered endearments in safety.
Often, when both had taken their places, Pyramus this side,
Thisbe on that, and caught the sound of the other's breathing,
"You spiteful wall!" they would cry. "Why stand in the way of poor lovers?
You mustn't think we're ungrateful; we grant that we owe it to you
that our words have been able to find their way to the ears of our loved ones.
If you would only allow us to lie in each other's arms!
If that is too much, could you open your cranny enough for a kiss?"

Exchanges like these were useless, with such an impassable barrier.
Night came on and they said goodbye, each printing a kiss
their side of the wall with lips that never could feel a response.
'Dawn on the following day had extinguished the stars of night,
and the sun's bright rays had melted the frost and dried the fields
when the lovers came to their usual tryst. This time, after sighing
their tale of woe, they made a decision: when all was quiet
that night, they would try to elude their guards and steal out of doors;
then once they'd escaped from their homes, they'd abandon the city as well.
In case they got lost on their journey out in the open country,
their rendezvous would be Ninus' tomb,* where they'd hide in the shade
of a certain tree – a tree which was tall and heavily laden
with snow-white berries, a mulberry – close to a cooling fountain.
The plan was agreed. Though the day passed all too slowly, at last
the sun plunged into the waves and night invaded the heavens.
'Craftily, using the darkness, Thisbe manoeuvred the doors
on their hinges and crept from the house unseen. With her face well covered,
she came to the tomb and sat down under the mulberry tree.
Love made her brave; when all of a sudden a lioness also
arrived to slake her thirst in the nearby fountain, her foaming

jaws besmeared with the blood of the cattle she'd newly slaughtered.
The moonlight allowed Babylonian Thisbe to sight this beast
some distance away and scuttle in fear to a murky cave.
In her flight the cloak she was wearing fell to the ground behind her.
When the savage creature had quenched her thirst with a long, cool drink
and was padding back to the woods, she chanced on the flimsy mantle
without its owner and mauled it inside her gory mouth.
Pyramus stole out later and came on the scene to observe
the unmistakable tracks of a wild beast, there in the deep dust.
At once he grew deadly pale; but when he had also discovered
the blood-drenched cloak, he exclaimed: "One night shall ruin two lovers!
Thisbe deserved far better to live to a ripe old age.
Mine is the guilty soul. Poor girl, it is I who've destroyed you
by making you find your way at night to this frightening place,
without being there to meet you. I call upon all of the lions
whose lairs are under this cliff to tear *my* body apart,
not my innocent love's, and devour *my* flesh in their merciless jaws!
Yet merely to pray for death is a coward's part." Then he picked up
Thisbe's mantle and carried it into the shade of the mulberry.
Bitterly weeping, he kissed the garment he knew so well,
and cried to it: "Now be soaked in the blood of Pyramus too!"

As he spoke, he plunged the sword he was wearing into his side
and at once, in his death-throes, pulled it out of the seething wound.
As he lay stretched out on the earth, his blood leapt up in a long jet,
just as a spurt from a waterpipe,* bursting because of its faulty
leadwork, gushes out through a tiny crack to create
a hissing fountain of water and cuts the air with its impact.
Splashed by the blood, the fruit on the mulberry tree was dyed
to a red-black colour; the roots were likewise sodden below
and tinged the hanging berries above with a purplish hue.
'Thisbe now returned to the scene, still afraid, but reluctant
to fail her lover, anxiously looking this way and that,
and longing to tell him what terrible danger she'd lately avoided.
The spot she could recognize, also the shape of the tree that she saw,
but the fruit's strange colour was puzzling. Could she have come to the wrong place?
While she wondered, she noticed some blood, then quivering limbs
pulsating upon the ground. She stepped back, paler than boxwood,
shivering like the sea when a light breeze ruffles the surface;
but after a little while she realized this was her lover,
and hammered resounding blows of grief on her innocent shoulders.
Tearing her hair and flinging her arms round Pyramus' body,
weeping over his wounds and mingling her tears with his blood,
she covered his death-cold face again and again with her kisses.

"Pyramus! What dread chance has taken you from me?" she wailed,
"Pyramus, answer! It's Thisbe, your dearest beloved, calling
your dear name. Listen, please, and raise your head from the ground!"
Pyramus' eyes were heavy with death, but they flickered at Thisbe's
name. He looked once more at his love, then closed them for ever.
'Recognizing her cloak and his ivory scabbard lying
empty, Thisbe exclaimed: "Poor Pyramus, killed by your own hand,
aided by love! I also can boast a hand with the courage
to brave such a deed, and my love will lend me the strength to strike.
I'll follow you down to the shades and be known as the ill-starred maiden
who caused and shared in your fate. Though nothing but death, alas,
could tear you away, not even death shall be able to part us.
You sad, unhappy fathers of Thisbe and Pyramus, hear us!
We both implore you to grant this prayer: as our hearts were truly
united in love, and death has at last united our bodies,
lay us to rest in a single tomb. Begrudge us not that!
And you, O tree, whose branches already are casting their shadows
on one poor body and soon will be overshadowing two,
preserve the marks of our death; let your fruit forever be dark
as a token of mourning, a monument marking the blood of two lovers."
She spoke, then placing the tip of the sword close under her breast,

she fell on the steely weapon, still warm with her Pyramus' blood.
Those prayers, however, had touched the hearts of the gods and the parents:
the fruit of the mulberry tree, when it ripens, is now dark red;
and the ashes surviving the funeral pyres are at rest in the same urn.'

MARS AND VENUS

There the tale ended. The briefest of intervals followed. Leucónoë
then took her turn to speak, while her sisters listened in silence:
'Even the Sun who sways the world with his brilliant star
Has fallen in love. My story's title is "Loves of the Sun God".*
This god is supposed to have been the first to spy the affair
between Mars and Venus;* this god is the first, in fact, to spy everything.
Shocked, he reported Venus' betrayal to Vulcan, her husband,
and also disclosed where the son of Juno could catch the offenders.
Vulcan's feelings were shattered; the piece of work he was crafting
dropped from his hands. At once he designed an intricate netting
by way of a trap, consisting of brazen links so fine
that the eye couldn't see them. The thinnest of wool threads couldn't be finer,
nor even a spider's web slung down from the height of a roof-beam.
He made the contrivance react to the gentlest of touches and slightest
of movements, deftly arranging it all to encircle the bed.

So when his wife and her paramour entered the chamber together,
the husband's exquisite art and ingenious netting enabled
the pair to be caught, unable to move, in the midst of their love-making.
Instantly Vulcan threw open the ivory doors and admitted
the other gods. There were the guilty ones lying together, entwined
in their shame! The gods were amused, and one of them murmured: "If only
I could be shamed like that!" Then all of them burst into laughter.
This story went the rounds of the sky for a long time afterwards.

LEUCOTHOË AND CLYTIË

'Venus took her revenge on the Sun for informing against her;
he had frustrated her secret affair and would soon be frustrated
in turn by a passion as strong. What use to Hypérion's son
would his beauty, amazing complexion and radiant beams be now?
The truth was, the god who burns the whole of the world with his fires
was burning himself with a strange new flame. The eye supposed
to see all was fixed on Leucóthoë; looks which he owed to the world
were on one pretty girl. He was rising too early and setting too late;
to prolong his gazing, he made the daylight in winter last longer.

Sometimes he'd fail altogether; his sickness of heart infected
his rays and the darkness drove the human race into panic.
His pallor was never due to the moon interposing itself
too low between him and the earth; it was love that had altered his colour.
None but Leucothoë drew him. Clýmene, Rhodos* and Perse,
Aeaéan Circe's beautiful mother, were all forgotten –
and Clýtië too; although he had scorned her, she still was eager
to lie in his arms, and this new turn of events had wounded her
deeply. Leucothoë made him forget many earlier passions.
She came from the land of incense.* The mother who bore her was called
Eurýnome – fairest of all, but after Leucothoë came
to her prime, the daughter's beauty exceeded the mother's no less
than the mother outshone the rest. Her father was Órchamus, ruler
of Persia's cities and seventh in line from ancient Belus.*
'Under the skies of the west are the fields where the Sun's steeds rest
and graze, not on grass, but ambrosia. That is the food which sustains
their exhausted limbs and revives their strength for the next day's journey.
So while his horses were munching on this celestial fodder
and night was on duty, the sun god entered his loved one's chamber,
taking the form of her mother, Eurynome. There by the lamplight
he saw Leucothoë busy among her dozen handmaidens,
chastely spinning the fine smooth wool on a twirling spindle.

So, kissing the girl as a mother might kiss her beloved daughter,
he said, "My business is confidential. Women, please leave us
alone. A mother must have the right to a private discussion."
The servants obeyed and soon the chamber was empty of witnesses.
"I am the one," he announced, "who measures the course of the long years,
who sees all things that exist and empowers the earth to see them,
the eye of the universe! Trust me, I love you!" Leucothoë trembled,
her fingers went limp, her distaff and spindle fell to the ground.
But even in fear she was lovely. The sun god waited no longer,
but quickly returned to his natural likeness and radiant splendour.
Shocked as she was by this sudden appearance, the girl was utterly
dazzled. Protest was vain and the Sun was allowed to possess her.
'Clytië's jealousy now was awakened – the passion the Sun
had felt for her once had not been half-hearted. Stung by anger
against her rival, she spread the scandal abroad and informed
Leucothoë's father. His action was savage and showed no mercy.
Unmoved by her prayers when she stretched her arms to the Sun's rays, pleading,
"He took me against my will!", he brutally buried his daughter
deep in the earth and piled a hillock of sand on her grave.

Hyperion's son then cut through the mound with his rays and opened
a gap which could have allowed her smothered face to emerge.
But the girl was unable to raise her head; she was totally crushed
by the weight of the earth and merely a lifeless, prostrate body.
Nothing, they say, had distressed the winged steeds' charioteer
so bitterly since the fire which destroyed his own son, Pháëthon.
The sun god tried to deploy the power of his rays to restore
his love's cold limbs, if only he could, to the warmth of life;
but all his attempts were opposed by fate. He therefore decided
to sprinkle the body and ground nearby with perfumed nectar.
Then, after a long lament, he cried: "You still shall return
to the air above!" At once the corpse, now permeated
with heavenly nectar, melted and soaked the earth with its fragrance.
Then gradually, through the soil, disrupting the mound with its tip,
there emerged the sprig of a fully rooted frankincense shrub.
'Clytië's love could well have excused her angry resentment
and so her turning informer; despite it, the lord of the daylight
abandoned his visits and brought his affair with her to a close.
Thenceforth she wasted away, for passion had turned to madness.
Rejecting her fellow-nymphs and passing her days and nights
in the open air, she sat on the hard bare soil, bareheaded,

with hair dishevelled. For nine whole days she refused all food
and drink; pure dew and her tears were enough in her starving condition.
She never stirred from the spot. She only gazed on the face
of the god in the sky and followed his course with her turning head.
They say that her limbs caught fast in the ground, and a bloodless pallor
changed her complexion in part to leaves of a yellowish green;
but the red in her cheeks remained and a flower like a violet covered
her face – the heliotrope, which is firmly rooted but turns
on its stem to its lover the Sun, still keeping faith in its new form.'*
Leuconoë finished. Her wonderful tale had entranced her audience.
Some said, 'It couldn't have happened'; but others declared, 'Real gods
can do anything!' – Bacchus, however, was not included among them.

SALMACIS AND HERMAPHRODITUS

Alcithoë's turn came next when her sisters again were silent.
Running her shuttle through the threads of her standing loom,
she started: 'No more of the loves* – they are too well known – of the shepherd
of Ida, Daphnis, turned to a rock by a nymph's proud anger
against her rival – lovers can be so wickedly jealous!

Nor shall I tell how once, in breach of the laws of nature,
Sithon's gender could alternate between male and female.
How about Celmis, who once looked after the baby Jupiter,
now transformed into steel? The Curétes,* born of the rain-shower?
Or Crocus and Smilax, his loved one, changed into tiny flowers?
No, I shall charm your ears with a tale that's completely new.
'I'm going to tell you about the notorious fountain of Sálmacis,
how it is so and why it softens and weakens the men
who bathe in its strength-sapping stream. Its effects are renowned, though the reason's
a mystery. Mercury once had a son by the goddess Venus,
nurtured and reared by the naiads who dwell in the caves on Mount Ida.
Father and mother could both be seen in his handsome features.
Between them they also gave him his name, Hermaphrodítus.*
Once he had reached the age of fifteen, he abandoned his native
mountains; Ida, his foster-mother, was left behind
as he ventured forth to explore the unknown; the sight of new places,
new rivers, enthralled him, excitement taking the pain out of travel.
He came as far as the cities of Lýcia and Lycia's neighbours
in Cária. Here he discovered a pool which was perfectly clear
right through to the bottom, entirely empty of marshy reeds,
unfertile sedge-grass and spiky rushes; the crystalline water
was lushly fringed by a circle of fresh and evergreen grass.
Now this was the home of a nymph, but one who didn't enjoy

the normal pursuits of archery, hunting and running races,
the only naiad not to belong to the train of Diana.
Often, the story goes, her anxious sisters would say to her,
"Salmacis, why don't you take your javelin or painted quiver
and vary this indolent life of yours with some hard, rough hunting?"
But Salmacis wouldn't take hold of her javelin or painted quiver
and vary that indolent life of hers with some hard, rough hunting.
Instead you would find her washing her beautiful limbs in her favourite
fountain, or lazily drawing her boxwood comb through her tresses,
using the pool as a mirror to find the most fetching hairstyle;
or else she'd put on an alluring dress which was fully transparent,
and softly recline on a cushion of leaves of luxurious grass.
Sometimes she'd gather flowers; and she chanced to be gathering flowers
when she saw this glorious boy and wanted at once to possess him.
'Keen as she was to approach him, she didn't move closer until
she had made herself pretty. She cast a careful eye on her dress
and arranged her expression. Nobody now could have questioned her beauty.
At last she spoke:* "Magnificent boy, one could easily take you
to be a god! If you *are* a god, you must surely be Cupid.

If only a mortal, why then, your parents are wonderfully
blessed!
How lucky your brother is, and so for sure are your sisters,
and also the woman who nursed you and gave you her
breasts to suck!
But far and away the most happy of all, if you are
betrothed,
is the maid whom torches escort to your house in the
wedding procession.
If she is already chosen, allow me a stolen pleasure;
if not, let *me* be your bride and take me at once to your
bed!"
So much from the nymph. The cheeks of the lad were
covered in blushes –
he didn't know what love was; but even his blushes became
him.
His skin was the colour of apples on trees in a sun-
drenched orchard,
or ivory steeped in dye, or the moon in eclipse when its
whiteness
is turned to red and cymbals are clashed* in vain to
restore it.
The naiad continually begged him to kiss her, at least like a
sister,
and started to put her hands on his ivory-coloured neck,
when he shouted, "Stop, or I'll run away and abandon you
here!"
Salmacis quivered with fear. "The place is entirely yours,
young stranger," she said, as she turned on her heels and
pretended to leave;
but even then she kept looking back and secreted herself
in the bushes nearby, crouched down on her knee.
Hermaphroditus,
thinking he had the grass to himself and that no one was
watching,
walked up and down by the pool, then dipped his toes in
the lapping

play of the stream and immersed his feet as far as the ankles.
The water was lovely, deliciously cool! Without further ado,
he removed his tunic so soft and so smooth from his body so slender.
Salmacis now was wildly excited. The sight of him naked
fired her desire to new heights. Her eyes were also on fire,
like the dazzling light of the sun's reflected rays, when a mirror
is raised to capture its shining disc at its brightest and clearest.
Any delay or postponement of joy was almost impossible.
Out of control in her frenzy, she had to embrace him *now*.
'The young man, cupping his palms and slapping his torso, swiftly
jumped down into the pool. As his arms flashed out in alternate
strokes, his body gleamed in the glassy water, like ivory
statues or pure white lilies encased in transparent crystal.
"Victory! He's mine!" the naiad shouted. Then stripping off all
her clothes and tossing them wide, she dived in after her quarry,
grabbed hold of his limbs as he struggled against her, greedily kissing him,
sliding her hands underneath him to fondle his unresponsive
nipples and wrapping herself round each of his sides in turn.
For all his valiant attempts to slip from her grasp, she finally

held him tight in her coils, like a huge snake* carried aloft
in an eagle's talons, forming knots round the head and the feet
of the royal bird and entangling the flapping wings in its tail;
or like the ivy which weaves its way round the length of a tree-trunk,
or else an octopus shooting all its tentacles out
to pounce on its prey and maintain its grip in the depths of the sea.
The boy held out like a hero, refusing the nymph the delights
that she craved for. Salmacis squeezed still harder, then pinning the whole
of her body against him, she clung there and cried: "You may fight as you will,
you wretch, but you shan't escape me. Gods, I pray you, decree
that the day never comes when the two of us here shall be riven asunder!"
Her prayer found gods to fulfil it. The bodies of boy and girl
were merged and melded in one. The two of them showed but a single
face. You know, when a twig is grafted on to a tree,
the stock and branch will join as they grow and mature together;
so, when those bodies united at last in that clinging embrace,
they were two no more but of double aspect, which couldn't be fairly
described as male or as female. They seemed to be neither and both.
'And so, when he saw that the pool which his manhood had entered had left him
only half of a man and this was the place where his limbs
had softened, Hermaphroditus stretched out his hands and appealed,

no more with a masculine voice: "Dear father and
mother, I pray you,
grant this boon to the son who bears the names of you
both:
whoever enters this pool as a man, let him weaken as
soon
as he touches the water and always emerge with his
manhood diminished!"
Venus and Mercury both were moved and fulfilled the
prayer
of their androgyne son by infecting the pool with a
neutering tincture.'

THE DAUGHTERS OF MINYAS (2)

Alcithoë's story was ended, and still the daughters of
Minyas
kept at their weaving in scorn of Bacchus, profaning his
feast day.
Suddenly, out of nowhere, their ears were harshly
assaulted
by clattering drums, the fearful skirling of Phrýgian
pipes*
and the strident clashing of cymbals. The perfume of
myrrh and of saffron
pervaded the air. Then, hard to believe, the looms
began
to grow green and the weaving to change into leafy
curtains of ivy.*
Part of it turned into vines, with the threads
transformed into tendrils.
Fronds shot out of the warp, and the purple dye in the
tapestry
lent its brilliant hue to clusters of deep-coloured
grapes.
By now the day had completed its course, and the time
was approaching

which couldn't be firmly established as either darkness or light
but a kind of disputed no man's land between night and day,
when the building suddenly seemed to be shaken and flames to leap
from the oil-rich lamps; the room was aglow with flickers of fiery
red and filled with howling spectres of savage beasts.
The sisters already were hiding in different corners around
the smoky house, to escape from the flames and the flickering lights;
and while they were searching for darkness, their limbs shrivelled up and a membrane
stretched across them to trap their arms in gossamer bat-wings.
How they had come to lose their former appearance they could not
tell for the gloom. They lacked any feathers to lift them upwards,
but simply hovered in air, sustained by their filmy, transparent
wings. When they tried to speak, their minuscule bodies would only
allow them to sigh for their lot in the thinnest and shrillest of squeaks.
Their haunts are covered spaces, not trees; as they loathe the daylight,
they fly in the night and take their Latin name from the evening.*

INO AND ATHAMAS

From that time onward the godhead of Bacchus was fully acknowledged
throughout all Thebes, and the newcomer's strength was widely proclaimed

by Ino, his mother's sister. Alone of the daughters of Cadmus
she knew nothing of grief, except what she felt for her sisters.
Her children, her marriage to Áthamas, filled her heart with exalted
pride, and so did the god she had nursed in his cradle.* When Juno
saw her, she said to herself in resentment: 'The son of that harlot,
Sémele, metamorphosed the Lydian sailors and plunged them
into the sea; he handed Agáve her own son's flesh
to be torn to pieces; and gave three daughters of Minyas bats' wings.
All *I* can do is to weep for sores that are never avenged.
Is weeping enough? Must that be the limit to Juno's sovereignty?
No! I can learn from my foe and follow Bacchus' example.
The slaughter of Pentheus is more than enough to demonstrate amply
the mischief that madness can work. Then why shouldn't Ino also
be goaded to madness and follow the way of her guilty sisters?'
Picture a path which is overcast by funereal yew trees,
sloping down to the realms below through a deathly silence.
Along this path, as the mist curls up from the motionless Styx,
the incoming shades are descending, the ghosts of the recently buried –
a rugged region, pervaded by pallor and cold, where the alien
spirits can find no sign to the road which leads to the Stygian

city and so to the dreadful palace of gloomy Dis.
The city has room for all, with its hundred approaches and gates
that are everywhere open. As all the rivers on earth flow into
the sea, so Hades admits every soul that arrives; it is never
too small for its new population and never begins to feel crowded.
Bloodless, bodiless, boneless, the spirits endlessly wander,
perhaps frequenting the forum or thronging King Pluto's palace;
they could be plying some trade they pursued in their former existence,
or else they are serving the punishment meted out to each one.
Yielding so far to her spiteful anger, Saturnian Juno
brought herself to abandon her heavenly throne and descend
to Hades. As soon as she'd passed inside and the threshold had groaned
beneath the weight of her sacred presence, Cérberus lifted
his three heads, barking with all three mouths at once. The goddess
then called on the awesome, implacable power of the sister Furies,
daughters of Night, who were sitting in front of the prison of hell,
with its great iron gates, and combing the black snakes out of their hair.
As soon as they recognized Juno approaching through the shadowy
gloom, they rose to their feet. She had come to the House of the Damned:*
here was the giant Títyos, sprawling across nine acres,
guts exposed to the vultures. There was Tántalus, failing
to drink any water or seize the elusive fruit-tree above him;
Sísyphus, pushing or chasing the rock which keeps rolling downwards;

Ixíon, pursuing and running away from himself on his wheel;
and Dánaus' daughters, who dared to murder their cousin husbands,
always refilling their jars with water, but only to lose it.
Grimly inspecting these tortured criminals, Juno specially
gazed at Ixion and, turning from him to contemplate Sisyphus,
asked herself: 'Why, of the sons of Aéolus,* why should this one
suffer perpetual torment, when Athamas, Sisyphus' brother,
proudly lives in a royal palace and joins his wife
in displaying contempt for *me*?' She then explained to the Furies
the grounds of her hatred and why she had come and what she wanted,
which was that Cadmus' kingdom should fall and Athamas also
be driven by madness to crime. As she pestered her audience to help her,
commands were mingled with prayers and pledges. Then after she'd finished,
Tisíphone* shook her hoary old locks, dishevelled as usual,
tossing the wriggling adders away from in front of her face.
'No need for a rambling explanation,' she said to the goddess.
'Consider your orders done. Now quit this loathsome domain
and take yourself back to your home in the healthier air of the heavens.'
Juno was glad to return; and just as she walked into heaven,
Iris sprinkled her body with water for purification.

Tisiphone wasted no time. In ruthless pursuit of her object
she seized a torch she had steeped in gore, she dressed in a red robe
dyed in a stream of blood, and girdled this with a writhing
snake as she left the house. She was joined on her way by the spirits
of Sorrow, Panic and Fear, and the wild-faced demon of Madness.
As soon as they stood on the threshold of Aeolus' palace, the doorposts
quivered (they say) and a sickly pallor spread over the maplewood
panels; the sun disappeared. The omens inspired Queen Ino,
Athamas too, with alarm. They at once made ready to leave,
but the sinister Fury blocked their way in front of the entrance,
firmly extending her arms coiled round in the knots of her vipers,
and tossed the locks on her head. The adders responded by noisily
straying across her shoulders or slithering over her bosom,
hissing and spewing gore and flicking their tongues in and out.
Tisiphone next wrenched two of the snakes from the midst of her hair
and flung them forth from her hand with lethal aim. The reptiles
landed and glided over the breasts of Ino and Athamas,
breathing their noxious breath on their victims without inflicting
a physical wound. The deadly effect was felt in the mind.
The Fury had also come with a marvellous liquid poison:
froth from Cerberus' mouth, the dreadful Echídna's venom,
derangement which causes the mind to wander, blinding forgetfulness,

crime and tears, with frenzy and bloodlust, all of them pounded
together and blended with fresh-spilt blood. This brew had been boiled
in a brazen cauldron and stirred with a stalk of evergreen hemlock.
Ino and Athamas quaked as she poured this poison of madness
over the breasts of them both and infected their innermost being.
Then seizing a torch, Tisiphone brandished and waved it around
in a circle, creating a rapid succession of flame after flame.
So in triumph, her mission discharged, she returned to the shadowy kingdom
of mighty Dis and untied the snake she had worn as a girdle.
Immediately Athamas, raving but still in the hall of his palace,
shouted, 'Huntsmen, your nets! And spread them over these woods here!
Look! I've sighted a lioness, there with two of her cubs!'
The madman then followed his wife, as though he were stalking a wild beast.
Snatching the baby Leärchus away from his mother's breast
(the infant was laughing and stretching his tiny hands out), Athamas
swung him around in the air like a sling, then savagely shattered
his own child's skull on the hard stone floor. The mother, at long last
kindled to fury by grief or the power of the sprinkled poison,
screamed and, with hair flowing wild, she fled from the hall in distraction,

her naked arms still clutching her other child, Melicértes.
'Help me, Bacchus!' she cried. At the name of Bacchus, Juno
laughed and replied, 'Let this be the thanks that your nursling repays you!'
Picture a cliff hanging over the sea, its lower part hollowed
out by the surf and protecting the waves beneath from the rain,
and its rocky summit jutting over the open water.
Ino, strong in her madness, climbed to the top of this headland
and into the ocean below, undaunted by fear, still holding
her baby, she jumped. The waves turned white where she struck the surface.

Venus, by contrast, was moved to pity by innocent Ino's
sufferings. Gently coaxing her uncle Neptune, she begged him
to help her granddaughter:* 'Lord of the Ocean, whose power is second
only to heaven's, I know I am asking the greatest of favours;
but please take pity upon my children whose bodies you see
are afloat in the vast Ionian Sea. Transform them to sea-gods.
Some credit is owed me in your domain, if I once was formed
out of foam in the midst of the sea, as the story survives in my Greek name.'*
Neptune gave his assent and, removing whatever was mortal
in Ino and Ino's child, he invested them both with an awesome
majesty. Changing their names along with their human appearance,
he called the new god Palaémon; the mother became Leucothoë.

Ino's companions from Thebes had followed the trail of her footprints

as far as they could, till they came to a halt at the edge of the headland.
Certain she must be dead, they tore at their hair, ripped open
their dresses and beat their breasts in grief for the house of Cadmus.
They tried to bring hatred on Juno by calling her vilely unjust
and excessively cruel to her rival (Sémele, Ino's sister).
Angry at their reproaches, the goddess cried, '*You* are the people
I'm going to make my excessive cruelty's principal monuments!'
True to her word, she acted. The friend whose devotion to Ino
had been the strongest declared, 'I shall follow and join my queen
in the water below!' She started to jump, but found herself rooted
fast to the rock, unable to move. A second attempted
the ritual of beating her breast and discovered her arms had suddenly
stiffened. Another by chance had extended her hands to the ocean,
and now a figure of stone portrayed the identical gesture.
One more was clutching her hair and trying to tear it out;
you could see her fingers had hardened around the hair she was tearing.
Whatever pose those women were caught in, they held it forever.
Some of the ill-starred daughters of Thebes were turned into gulls,
which even today still brush the Ionian Sea with their wing-tips.

CADMUS AND HARMONIA

Cadmus was never aware that his daughter and baby grandson
had been transformed into sea-gods. His grief, a string of disasters,
the numberless portents he'd witnessed had overwhelmed him; he therefore
abandoned the city he once had founded, as though his undoing
were due to a curse on the place, not his own bad luck. When he'd wandered
far with his wife in their exile, they reached the Illyrian frontier.*
There, weighed down by their years and their troubles, they traced their family
fortunes back to the start and recalled the evils they'd suffered.
'That serpent I pierced with my spear, at the time when I came from Sidon,
and scattered its teeth on the ground to grow into strange new warriors –
could it by any chance have been sacred?', Cadmus wondered.
'Perhaps I provoked the wrath of the gods and this is their certain
revenge. If so, let me also be changed to a long-bellied serpent!'*
As soon as he'd spoken, his form was changed to a long-bellied serpent.
He felt his skin growing hard and gaining a layer of scales;
his body was turning black and speckled with bluish spots.
Then down he fell on his front. His two legs melded to one
and little by little thinned down to a sinuous, slithery tail.
He still had his arms and, while they remained, he stretched them out,

as the tears streamed down the cheeks which still were a man's. 'Come close to me,
please!' he appealed to his wife. 'Come close, poor darling, and touch me
while something of mine is left. Please take my hand while it's there
to be taken, before the snake has enveloped the whole of my body.'
Cadmus wanted to say much more, but his tongue was suddenly
split into two like a fork. The words he wanted to utter
failed to come out. Whenever he tried to express his sorrow,
he hissed, for this was the only voice which nature had left him.
Beating her naked breasts in her grief, his wife protested:
'Stay with me, ill-starred Cadmus! Abandon this monstrous shape!
Oh, Cadmus, what does it mean? Your feet have vanished, your shoulders,
your hands, your colour, your face – yes, everything, while I was speaking!
Heavenly gods, why cannot you make me a serpent too?'
Cadmus' response was to flicker his tongue on his dear wife's cheeks,
glide his way to her breasts, as though he knew he'd be safe there,
fold himself round her and up to the neck which he'd loved to caress.
The friends who were present were filled with terror. Harmónia merely
stroked and fondled the sleek, smooth neck of the crested serpent.
Then all at once there were two of them, gliding with coils intertwined
till they entered the woods nearby and quietly slipped into hiding.

As in the past, they will neither avoid nor attack human beings;
these snakes are harmless because they remember their former existence.

PERSEUS (1)

Although they were now transformed into serpents, Bacchus had given
his grandparents much to console them: India had been subdued
to his cult and Greece was showing him honour in fine-built temples.
Acrísius,* son of Abas, descended like Cadmus from Neptune,
alone among all the rulers refused Dionýsus admission
into his city of Argos, opposed him with arms and denied
he was Jupiter's son. Moreover, he didn't accept that his grandson
Pérseus, conceived in the shower of gold by his daughter Dánaë,*
was Jupiter's son. But truth will out. Acrisius later
regretted his violence against the god as much as his failure
to know his grandson. Bacchus now was enthroned in the heavens,
while Perseus was flying on whirring wings* through the yielding air,
bearing his famous trophy, the head of the snake-headed Gorgon;*
and as he triumphantly hovered over the Libyan desert,
some drops of blood from the Gorgon's neck fell down to the sand,
where the earth received them and gave them life as a medley of serpents;
which explains why Libya now is infested with poisonous reptiles.

Driven from there by the warring winds through the vast empyrean,
Perseus was wafted this way and that, like a scudding raincloud.
Poised high up in the ether he looked right down to the earth
such a distance below, as he traversed the whole of the world in his flight.
Three times he sighted the Bears in the north and the great-clawed Crab
in the south; he would often be swept to the west, then back to the east.
And now, as the day declined, mistrustful of flying at night,
he touched down on to the western world, in the kingdom of Atlas,
and asked for a few hours' rest, till the star of the morning summoned
the fires of the dawn and signalled release for the new day's chariot.
This was the home of the son of Iápetus, Atlas, whose massive
frame exceeded all mortal men's. His kingdom embraced
earth's farthest coasts and the sea, whose waters are ready to welcome
the panting steeds and the weary wheels of the setting sun.
A thousand flocks and a thousand herds were wandering over
his grassy domain; no troublesome neighbours encroached on his borders.
Here was a tree whose leaves were shining with brilliant gold,
whose branches were also of gold and laden with golden apples.
'Sir,' said Perseus to Atlas at once, 'if you have respect

for distinction of noble birth, then I am descended from
Jove;
if deeds of prowess impress you, you must be impressed by
mine.
I therefore ask you for shelter and rest.' Then Atlas
remembered
an ancient oracle, spoken to him by Themis at Delphi:
'Atlas, a time will arrive when your tree will be robbed of
its gleaming
Gold and a son of Jove will achieve the glory of
winning it.'
Fearing marauders, Atlas had carefully ringed his orchard
with thick-built walls and set an enormous dragon to
guard it;
he wanted to keep all strangers firmly away from his
boundaries.
Perseus was no exception. 'Remove yourself,' he insisted.
'You're lying. The exploits you boast of and even descent
from Jove
may work to your disadvantage!' Force was added to
threats
when Atlas attempted to throw him out; but Perseus refused
to shift and answered in tones that were mild as well as
courageous.
He couldn't compete in physical strength – that was out of
the question;
he merely said to the giant, 'Well, since you value my
friendship
so little, here is a gift!' Then turning his face, he produced
from a bag on his left-hand side the loathsome head of
Medúsa.
The mighty Atlas was turned to a mighty mountain; his hair
and beard were transformed into trees, his massive
shoulders and arms
to a line of ridges, his erstwhile head to a cloud-capped peak;
his bones became rocks. Then rising high in every
direction

he grew and he grew and he grew (so the gods had decreed), till the whole
of the sky with all of its stars could now bed down on his ranges.

The winds had all been imprisoned by Aéolus, god of the tempests,
inside his cave. The morning star which summons to work
had risen, bright in the sky. So Perseus fastened the wings
of his sandals again on his feet and girded himself with his hooked sword.
Soon he was cutting a path through the air on his fluttering anklets,
passing an infinite number of countries around and below him.
He finally sighted the realm of Ethiopian Cépheus,*
where Ammon, the god of the land, had unjustly ordered the princess
Andrómeda, innocent girl, to pay the price for her boastful
mother who claimed to surpass the daughters of Néreus in beauty.
When Perseus noticed the maiden tied by the arms to a jagged
rock-face (but for the light breeze stirring her hair and the warm tears
coursing over her cheeks, he would have supposed she was merely
a marble statue), unconscious desire was kindled within him.
Dumbly amazed and entranced by the beautiful vision before him,
he almost omitted to move his wings as he hovered in air.
Then once he'd alighted, he said to the maiden, 'Shame on such fetters!

You shouldn't be bound by these but the ties of passionate lovers.
I ask you to tell me your name, sweet girl, and the name of your country.
Tell me why you are chained here.' At first she was silent, constrained
by maidenly shyness in front of a man; if her hands had been free
of their bonds, she'd have lifted them up to her face to cover her blushes.
Her eyes could speak, though, filled as they were with welling tears.
He continued to press her and therefore, not to appear to be hiding
a fault of her own, she told him her name and the name of her country,
and how her mother had wickedly boasted about her beauty.
Her story was still unfinished, when out of the sea there resounded
a sinister roar and, advancing across the expanse of ocean,
breasting the surge of the waves, there emerged a menacing monster.
Andromeda screamed; her sorrowing father and with him her mother
arrived on the scene, both greatly distressed, though the mother more justly.
They brought no help but simply engaged in the usual rituals
of weeping and beating of breasts. As they clung to the girl's chained body,
the stranger protested: 'Your tears and laments can be safely indulged
later on and at length; a rescue is needed now and with all speed.
I am the Perseus fathered by Jove and mothered by Danaë,
impregnated by Jupiter's gold as she languished in prison,

the Perseus who killed the snake-headed Gorgon and ventured to fly
through the air on fluttering wings. If I were courting this maiden,
I'd be the suitor you surely preferred for her husband-to-be.
To these most splendid endowments, if heaven is kind, I shall add
my valiant service. These are my terms: if I rescue your daughter,
she shall be mine.' Her parents agreed – they could hardly refuse –
and to crown their entreaties they promised Perseus the kingdom as dowry.
There comes the monster, parting the waves with the thrust of his huge breast,
just as a war-galley, strongly propelled by its sweating oarsmen,
speedily furrows a path with its sharp-beaked prow through the ocean.
Now it was steadily nearing the cliffs, as close as the range
of a spinning bullet discharged through the air from a Bálearic sling;
when suddenly Perseus, pushing away from the earth with his sandals,
soared aloft to the clouds. When the hero's shadow appeared
on top of the water, the frightened monster fiercely attacked it.
Imagine an eagle sighting a serpent, sunning its dark blue
back in an empty field, and swooping down on its prey
from behind; to escape the poison discharged from the fangs, it greedily
grips the scaly neck in its talons. So valiant Perseus
swooped straight down through the air to stab the beast in the back,

and through its right shoulder he buried his sword-blade
up to the curved hilt.
Roaring with pain and severely wounded, the monster
reared itself
high in the air, then plunged down into the waves, then
turned
like a savage but terrified boar when the dogs are baying
around him.
Poised on his swift wings, Perseus eluded his ravening
enemy's
jaws and went for his weak points, hacking away with his
hooked sword,
now at its barnacled back and then at the ribs, then
again
at the narrowest point of the tail where it tapered into a
fish.
The monster spewed forth seawater mingled with crimson
blood,
drenching Perseus' sandals in spray and weighing them
down.
Not daring to trust his sodden wings any further, the man
caught sight of a rock whose summit projects from a calm
sea's surface
but cannot be seen when the ocean is rough. So Perseus the
valiant,
bracing himself against this, gripping its top with his left
hand,
plunged his weapon again and again through the monster's
vitals.
The shouts of applause re-echoed along the shore and
above
in the halls of Olympus. Andromeda's mother, Cassiopeía,
and Cepheus, her father, were both delighted; Perseus was
hailed
as their daughter's betrothed and proclaimed as the saviour
and stay of the house.
The princess, quickly released from her chains, came
forward to greet him.

Her danger had prompted his feat; she was now the reward for his courage.

The victorious hero cleansed his hands in the water they drew for him.
Fearing to bruise the Gorgon's snake-covered head on the hard sand,
he softened the ground with leaves and covered it over with seaweed,
to serve as a mat for the head of Medusa, the daughter of Phorcys.
The fronds which were fresh and still abundant in spongy pith
absorbed the force of the Gorgon and hardened under her touch,
acquiring a strange new stiffness in all the stems and the foliage.
The sea-nymphs tested this miracle out on additional fronds
of seaweed. Excited to find this yielded the same result,
they repeated the marvel by tossing the plant's seeds over the waves.
Coral even today preserves this identical property:
contact with air induces its hardness and what was a flexible
shoot under water is turned to rock on the ocean's surface.

Next Perseus built three altars of turf to three of the gods:*
the one on the left to Mercury, that on the right to Minerva,
the central altar to Jupiter. Victims were duly offered:
a cow for the warlike maiden, a calf for the wing-footed guide
and a bull for the king of the gods. Without any further delay,

Perseus claimed the reward for his valiant deed, Andromeda,
seeking no further dowry. The wedding torches were flourished
by Hymen and Love; the fires were richly supplied with incense;
garlands hung from the palace roof; and everywhere singing
to music of lyre and pipe auspiciously signified joy.
And now the doors were flung open, the golden halls were revealed
with a sumptuous banquet prepared, and Cepheus' court was admitted.
The feasting was over and hearts were relaxed with the flowing wine,
when the bridegroom asked a few questions about the land and its products,
social customs and attitudes held by the people who lived there.
The prince who replied went on: 'Now, Perseus, bravest of heroes,
please will you tell us the story of how your remarkable courage
and skill combined to remove the head of the snake-haired Gorgon?'
Their guest then mentioned a freezing glen at the foot of Mount Atlas,
tightly enclosed by a fortification of massive rocks.
Two sisters had lived by the valley's entrance, the daughters of Phorcys,*
who shared the use of a single eye, which Perseus had craftily
stolen as one was passing it on to the other, by slipping
his hand underneath, thus forcing the Graiae to give him directions.
He travelled through rocky regions remote and secluded, littered

with broken trees, and finally came to the home of the Gorgons.
Across the fields and along the tracks he had seen the statues
of men and of beasts transformed to stone at the sight of Medusa.
He, however, had only looked on those terrible features
as they were reflected in bronze, on the shield which he held in his left hand;
and while Medusa as well as her adders lay buried in sleep,
he had lopped her head from its neck. In consequence, swift-winged Pégasus*
sprang from his mother's blood, along with his brother Chrysáor.
Perseus also narrated the dangers he'd faced on his long voyage,
naming the seas and the lands he had viewed from his flight through the air,
and all the stars which he'd lightly brushed with his beating wings,
but his audience wanted more. He was asked by one of the court
why Medusa, alone of her sisters, had snakes entwined in her hair.
'That is an excellent question,' responded the guest; 'let me give you
the answer. Medusa was once an exceedingly beautiful maiden,
whose hand in marriage was jealously sought by an army of suitors.
According to someone who told me he'd seen it, her marvellous hair
was her crowning glory. The story goes that Neptune the sea god
raped this glorious creature inside the shrine of Minerva.

Jove's daughter screened her virginal eyes with her aegis* in horror,
and punished the sin, by transforming the Gorgon's beautiful hair
into horrible snakes.' (That explains why, to startle her foes into terror,
the goddess always displays those snakes on the front of her bosom.*)

BOOK 5

The story of *Perseus* (1–249) continues with a great wedding-banquet fight, as the hero who won Andromeda is challenged by Phineus, to whom she was previously betrothed. The battle is narrated in epic style, in imitation of Odysseus' fight with the suitors at the feast in the palace of Ithaca (*Odyssey* 22). The gory details were probably more to the taste of Ovid's audience in ancient Rome than they will be to some modern readers; but there are moments of genuine pathos in the deaths of the Indian boy Athis and his lover Lycabas, of the elder Emathion and the minstrel Lampetides. The poet naturally makes great play with the transforming power of the Gorgon's head – which Perseus might quite easily have produced a great deal earlier!

Minerva and the Muses (250–340) takes us into a more tranquil world, though one still troubled by strife. We meet the Muses, who report an unpleasant encounter with the tyrant Pyreneus and also the singing contest to which they were challenged by the daughters of Pierus, now transformed into magpies. The leading Pierid's song had imagined the giants as (contrary to tradition) defeating the gods in battle, and so had portrayed the earth as a source of evil. The Muses had chosen Calliope to represent themselves and she had responded with three stories in her (much longer) song:

1. *The Rape of Proserpina* (341–571). This is modelled on the Homeric Hymn to Demeter and opens with an invocation of Ceres, the Earth Mother, as a source of good. Calliope narrates the familiar myth of the seasons: Pluto abducts Ceres' daughter, Proserpina the spring goddess, to the underworld,

and her mother eventually obtains her restoration to earth for six months of the year. The story is interspersed with four short, thematically unconnected, metamorphoses:

the nymph Cyane (409–37)
the offensive boy (438–61)
Ascalaphus (533–50)
the Sirens (551–63)

In this long section, there is much vivid detail to enjoy, not least the description of the countryside in Sicily from which Proserpina is abducted, but it is not difficult to lose the main framework. One certainly forgets Calliope fairly quickly.

2. The same applies even more in *Arethusa* (572–642), a nymph (like Cyane) transformed to a spring at Syracuse, whom Ceres has encountered in her search for Proserpina and so discovered her daughter's whereabouts (487–508). Arethusa's account of her own metamorphosis and presence in Sicily following her pursuit by the lustful river-god Alpheüs is another story in Ovid's best erotic manner. It reminds us of Apollo's pursuit of *Daphne* (1.451 ff.) and, in its saltier details, of *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus* (4.274 ff.).

3. In *Triptolemus and Lyncus* (643–61) the beneficent power of Ceres is reaffirmed in her gift of corn to the Athenian Triptolemus and the transformation of his would-be-murderer into a lynx.

A brief conclusion (662–78): Calliope's song is judged better than that of the Pierides, who are punished for their clamorous objections by their transformation to magpies.

PERSEUS (2)

While Pérseus, Dánaë's son, was telling his story before
the assembled Ethiopian chiefs, a noisy commotion
broke out in the royal halls; it was not the convivial cheering
that graces a wedding feast, but the clamour which augurs a riot.
A banquet that suddenly turns to a brawl might well be compared
to a calm sea rudely disturbed by a violent, howling gale,
which has made it exceedingly rough and lashed the waves to a fury.
Leading the riot was Cépheus' brother, Phíneus, who rashly
started a fight as he brandished his bronze-tipped ashen spear.
'Look!' he shouted to Perseus. 'I've come to avenge the theft
of my bride.* You won't be saved by your wings or by Jupiter changing
himself into counterfeit gold.'* As he aimed his weapon, Cepheus
cried to his brother, 'What are you doing? What crazy notion
is goading you into a crime? Is this the reward to be offered
for such great service, the dowry you pay for Andrómeda's rescue?
To tell you the truth, it wasn't Perseus who took her away from you.
No, you must blame the Néreïds' anger, the horned god Ammon,
the monster who rose from the sea to sate its ravening jaws

on the fruit of my own loins. That was the time when you lost her, the time
when death was about to take her away – unless, cruel brute,
her death is what you're demanding and only our grief can console you.
It wasn't enough, I suppose, that you saw her chained to the cliff
and offered no help, though you were her uncle and promised husband.
To make matters worse, when someone has freed her, you have to resent it
and venture to steal the reward! If it matters so much to you now,
why didn't you fetch her away from the rocks to which she was pinioned?
The prize has gone to a hero who saved an old father from losing
his daughter. Allow him to take what I promised and what he's deserved.
Do realize we didn't prefer him to you but to certain death.'
Phineus said not a word, but glared at his brother and Perseus
in turn, uncertain which of the two he should aim to kill.
After a brief hesitation he hurled his spear with all
the power that his anger could lend him at Perseus – but missed his target;
the weapon was caught in the cushions. Perseus at last leapt up
from his seat and savagely flung the spear back; indeed he'd have pierced
his opponent's heart, if the villainous Phineus hadn't escaped
to the back of the altar and shamefully taken sanctuary there.
But the spear wasn't thrown in vain; it lodged in the forehead of Rhoetus,

who fell to the ground. When the point was wrenched from his skull, his feet
jerked out, and the food on the banqueting table was spattered with blood.
Now furious passions rose in the crowd and tempers were blazing.
Weapons began to fly. There were some who argued that Cepheus
deserved to die with his daughter's bridegroom, but Cepheus already
had left the palace, invoking the names of Justice, Faith
and the gods of the hearth to protest that the riot was none of his making.
Minerva, the warrior goddess, arrived to encourage Perseus
and give her brother protection behind her impregnable aegis.*
Among the throng was an Indian youth, called Athis. Limnaée,
the Ganges' daughter, is thought to have given him birth in the crystal
waves of the river. His wonderfully handsome looks were enhanced
by his elegant clothes; still a pure and innocent boy of sixteen,
he was dressed in a cloak of Tyrian purple, trimmed with a golden
border; his neck was adorned with a delicate golden chain,
while his hair was scented with myrrh and held in place by a circlet.
Athis had mastered the skills of throwing the javelin at targets
however remote, but his gifts as an archer were even greater.
On this occasion his hand was bending his pliant bow,
when Perseus, seizing a smoking brand from the altar, struck him

across the face, which was smashed to pulp as the bones were shattered.
Assyrian Lýcabas, Athis' most intimate friend, who had never concealed the truth of the love that he felt for him, saw the features
he'd fondly worshipped emblazoned in blood. In a passion of grief
for the youth who had suffered such cruel hurt and was gasping his life out,
he snatched the bow which Athis had aimed and shouted to Perseus,
'Your fight must now be with me! You shan't be gloating for long
over killing a boy whose murder has won you more hatred than glory.'
Before he had finished, his sharp-tipped arrow was shot from the string,
but Perseus ducked and it merely caught in the folds of his tunic.
Quickly Acrísius' grandson drew his sickle-shaped sword,
well-tried in the blood of Medúsa, and slashed his challenger's chest.
As Lycabas' swimming eyes grew blurred in the darkness of death,
he looked all round for his Athis and fell at the poor youth's side.
They had died together, and that was the comfort he took to the underworld.
There! Syénian Phórbas, the son of Metíon, rushing
forward with Libyan Amphímedon, eager to join in the fighting!
Both slipped and fell in the pool of blood still warm on the earth.
As they tried to pick themselves up, they encountered Perseus' sword:
Amphimedon in the ribs and Phorbas across his throat.
Érytus, son of Actor, however, was armed with a great, broad

double-edged axe. To stand against him, our hero discarded
his hook-shaped sword and instead grabbed hold of a massive bowl,
embossed by its craftsman in high relief and enormously weighty.
Lifting it up in both hands, he dashed it down on his victim,
who vomited blood in a gush as he fell on his back and pounded
the earth with his head. Polydégmon, scion of Queen Semíramis'
house, was next to be laid on the ground; then Ábaris, born
in the Caucasus mountains; Lycétus who lived by the river Sperchéüs;
Hélices, always with hair unshorn; and Clytus with Phlégyas.
Perseus was trampling on piles of the dying mounting in front of him.
Phineus lacked the courage to brave his foe at close quarters,
but hurled his javelin, which went astray and fell upon Idas,
who'd tried in vain to keep out of the fray and had stayed impartial.
Gazing with angry eyes on his cruel assailant, Idas
said to him: 'Phineus, since I am forced to take sides, you must now
accept the foe you have made and pay for a blow with a blow!'
Then drawing the spear from his body, he struggled to throw it back,
but his limbs were drained of their blood and he quickly collapsed on the ground.
Then also Hodítes, next in rank to the king of the Céphenes,

fell to Clýmenus' sword. Prothoénor was slaughtered by Hýpseus,
whom Perseus slaughtered in turn. Among the crowd was an elder,
Emáthion, known for his love of justice and fear of the gods.
His years prevented him fighting, so words had to serve him for weapons.
Striding forward, he cursed and denounced the impious brawl,
then knelt by the altar. His trembling hands were clutching its sides,
when Chromis cut off his head. It toppled straight on the slab,
and there a half-living tongue continued to utter its curses
until all life was exhausted and finally lost in the flames.
Next a pair of twin brothers, Ammon and Bróteas, boxers
and champions unbeaten, if swords could be beaten by boxing thongs,
were struck to the ground by the hand of Phineus; so was Ámpycus,
priest of Ceres, although he was wearing his white wool headband;
Lampétides also was killed, who wasn't there for the fighting
but merely the peaceful purpose of playing the lyre and performing
the joyful songs he'd been ordered to sing at the wedding feast.
He was standing apart, with only his harmless plectrum in hand,
when Péttalus mockingly cried, 'You can sing the rest of your songs
to the shades of the Styx!' and he plunged his sword in the bard's left temple.
Lampetides fell. His dying fingers fumbled back

to the strings and, in tune with his fall, struck up a dejected lament.
Lycórmas, furious, wouldn't allow the minstrel to die unavenged. He wrenched the stout wood bar from the right-hand doorpost,
crashed it down on the nape of Pettalus' neck, and laid him
flat on the ground like a sacrificed bullock. Cinýphian Pélates
tried to remove the other bar, from the left-hand post, but before he could do it, his hand was pierced by the Carthaginian
Córythus' spear and pinned to the wood. As he helplessly clung there,
Abas wounded him through the side; unable to fall, he hung from the post where his hand was nailed, until he expired.
Death came also to Mélaneus, one of Perseus' supporters,
and Dórylas, known as the wealthiest man in the whole of Libya –
Dorylas rich in land, whose estates of cornfields and mounting
heaps of imported incense were larger than anyone else's.
Rich as he was, he was struck by a javelin thrown from the side
in the groin, that sensitive place. When Bactrian Hálcyoneus,
who had thrown the weapon, could see him rolling his eyes in pain
and gasping his last, he said, 'Of all your acres of land you may keep the patch where you're lying!' and left the body to rot there.
But soon he was punished by Perseus, who wrested the spear from the still warm
wound and flung it towards him. Landing on top of the Bactrian's

nose, the shaft emerged through his neck and protruded on each side.
While fortune favoured the hand of Perseus, he murdered Clanis
and Clýtius, born of the selfsame mother but differently wounded.
Clytius' thighs were skewered by Perseus' powerfully brandished
spear of ash, while Clanis' teeth had to bite on a javelin.
Céladon also was killed (he was born by the Nile in Mendes),
and Ástreus, child of a Palestine whore by an unknown father.
Aethíon perished who once was deeply versed in clairvoyance
but then had badly mistaken the omens; Thoáctes, the royal
armour-bearer; and lastly Agýrtes, the infamous parricide.
Perseus was weary, but more was to come since he was alone
and the rest were determined to crush him. The milling throng had united,
sworn to fight in a cause that opposed all merit and good faith.
His only backers were Cepheus, whose loyalty counted for little,
along with the bride and her mother, who filled the hall with their screaming,
drowned though it was by the clashing of arms and the groans of the dying.
Meanwhile, the goddess of war* polluted the household gods
and drenched them in rivers of blood, as she caused fresh strife and confusion.
Now Phineus and all of a thousand supporters were there in a ring,
surrounding Perseus alone. Their arrows were flying past him

thicker than hailstones to either side, by his eyes and his ears.
He stood with his back to a great stone pillar to cover his rear,
then faced the crowd as they pressed towards him, and held them off.
Chaónian Mólpeus was close to his left, to his right was Arabian
Echémmon. Think of a tigress, goaded to madness by hunger,
who hears two herds of cattle lowing in separate valleys;
she cannot decide which herd to attack, but is longing to pounce on them
both. So Perseus: was he to strike to the right or the left?
In the end he disposed of Molpeus by wounding him through the shin
and letting him flee, since Echemmon allowed him no further time
and was frantically trying to drive his sword through his enemy's throat.
But his powerful thrust was clumsily aimed; the blade of his weapon
struck the edge of the pillar and shattered. A flying splinter
of metal lodged in Echemmon's throat, but it wasn't sufficient
to cause his death. While he stood there trembling, vainly outstretching
his weaponless hands, the hero dispatched him with Mercury's hooked sword.
When Perseus saw that the crowd was more than his courage could handle,
he cried to them all, 'Since you yourselves are forcing me to it,
I'll now seek help from my foe. If I've any friends here, I advise them

to turn their faces away!' – and he brandished the head of the Gorgon.
'Find another to scare with your riddles!' Théscelus answered;
but just as he started to cast his deadly javelin, his body froze, like a statue, in throwing position. The next to challenge
Perseus the lion-heart was Ampyx, who thrust his sword at the hero's
breast; as he did it, his right hand stiffened, unable to move either forward or back. Then Níleus, who'd falsely claimed to be sprung
from the Nile with its seven mouths, and whose shield was embossed with seven
rivers in silver and gold, called out to him, 'Perseus, look at my family's founder! To have such a hero as me for your killer
must surely console you amongst the voiceless shades.' But his final
words were cut off as he said them. To judge by his open lips,
you'd suppose that he wanted to speak, but the sounds couldn't find a way through.
These three were taunted by Eryx: 'It isn't the power of the Gorgon
that's making you numb but your feeble courage. Now join me in charging
this youth as he toys with his magic weapons, and laying him flat!'
The charge was about to begin, when his feet stuck fast to the earth
and he stayed, a motionless rock in the lasting form of an armed man.
These deserved to be punished; but one called Acónteus, a soldier
on Perseus' side, set eyes on the Gorgon during the fight, and his body grew firm and hard as the stone crept over his frame.

Astýages, thinking the fellow was still alive, struck out
with his sword's full length, but all it produced was an
echoing clang.
As he stood where he was, dumbfounded, he turned into
stone himself,
with a face which preserved his expression of wonder
in marble for ever.
You'd find it tedious to learn the names of the rank
and file
involved in the fray. Two hundred bodies survived the
battle;
another two hundred were turned to stone at the sight
of the Gorgon.
Phineus at last regretted the riot he'd caused so
unfairly;
but what could he do? As his eyes travelled round the
different statues,
he recognized his own friends and cried to each one by
his name,
appealing for help. In disbelief he fingered the forms
that were nearest, and all were marble! Turning away
and admitting
defeat, he extended his arms sideways* in a plea for
mercy.
'You win, Perseus,' he said. 'Put away your monster,
remove
your Medusa, whoever she is, with the stare which
turns us to stone.
Please take it away! It wasn't personal hate or kingly
ambition
which drove me to start the fighting. I simply wanted
my bride.
You surely deserved to win her, but I was betrothed to
her first.
I yield to you gladly. Only allow me, most valiant of
heroes,
to keep my miserable life, and all the rest can be yours.'

He spoke without daring to look at the man he was begging to spare him.
Then Perseus gave him his answer: 'Phineus, you spineless coward,
no need to be scared. I'll allow you all that I can – a handsome
gift for a weakling like you. You shan't be put to the sword, man.
No, I shall make you a lasting memorial for all posterity.
You'll be on permanent view in the house of my father-in-law,
that my wife may console herself with her former intended's likeness.'
With that he quickly carried Medusa across to display her
where Phineus had turned his quivering head. As the cowering villain
attempted to shift his eyes away once again, his neck
grew stiff and the tears running down his cheeks were hardened to stone.
But still a coward's face and the suppliant's look were preserved
in marble, along with the pleading hands and the cringing posture.

Perseus returned with his wife to his native city in triumph.
Once there, he avenged and championed his grandfather (not that the old man
greatly deserved it) by challenging Proetus* who'd ousted his brother
by force of arms and taken control of Acrisius' fortress.
This time not force of arms nor the fortress he'd seized could enable
Proetus to counter the terrible eyes of the snake-wreathed Gorgon.
Polydéctes,* however, who ruled the tiny island of Sériphos,

failed to be moved by the dangers that Perseus had faced and the courage
he'd shown in so many exploits. He still held on to his stubborn,
relentless hatred and never ceased from his unjust anger.
He even belittled the hero's glory and claimed that Medusa's
death was a fiction. 'Here is the proof that my story is true,'
cried Perseus to all. 'Watch out for your eyes!' And the face of the king
was turned at once into bloodless stone by the face of Medusa.

MINERVA AND THE MUSES

Minerva supported her brother, born in the shower of gold,
throughout these trials. But now she wrapped herself in a hollow
cloud and departed from Seriphos. Cythnos and Gýaros lay
to her right; then finding the shortest crossing over the sea,
she made for Thebes and the mountain of Hélicon, home of the Muses.
Here she landed and spoke to the sisters who govern the arts:
'A rumour has come to my ears of a fountain that started to gush
when the earth was struck by the hoof of the winged horse* sprung from Medusa.
Hence my arrival. I wanted to see this amazing spring,
as I witnessed the horse's birth from the blood of his Gorgon mother.'
Uránia answered: 'Whatever your reason for coming to visit us

here in our home, kind goddess, we feel great pleasure.
The story you heard is correct: the winged horse Pégasus started
our spring'; and she took Minerva down to the sacred fountain.
Slowly admiring the waters which Pegasus' hoof had created,
the goddess surveyed the clusters of grand, primeval trees,
mysterious caves and grass bejewelled with myriads of flowers.
She declared that Memory's daughters were truly blessed in their dwelling
as well as the arts they ruled. Then one of the sisters addressed her:
'Minerva, goddess who fitly could join our musical company,
had not your own fine qualities marked you out for yet greater
tasks, your praise of our arts and our home is truly deserved.
Ours is a happy lot, if we could but be sure of our safety.
Sadly, the hearts of the virgin Muses are constantly anxious;
crime these days has no bars. The image of wicked Pyréneus*
is always in front of my eyes and the shock has not left me completely.
That savage tyrant was occupying Daulis and Phocis,
lands he'd unjustly seized with the aid of his Thracian soldiers,
and we were travelling through to our temple on Mount Parnássus.
He saw us coming and, smiling as though he respected our godhead,
said to us, "Memory's daughters" (he knew who we were), "please rest here.
You mustn't refuse to shelter under my roof in this shocking

downpour" (the weather was dreadful); "the gods have often been seen
in humbler abodes* than mine." So, swayed by his words and the storm,
we accepted his invitation and entered the hall of his palace.
Later the rain subsided; the wind had changed to the north,
and the murky clouds were scudding away in a clearing sky.
As we made a move to depart, Pyreneus bolted the doors
and tried to assault us, but we escaped him by taking wing.*
As though he intended to follow, the king climbed up to the battlements,
shouting, "Whichever pathway you take, I'll find it and follow!"
Quite out of his wits, he cast himself from the top of the tower
and fell face forward down to the ground. He shattered his skull,
and stained the earth with his impious blood as he crashed to his death.'

The Muse was speaking, when suddenly through the air there resounded
a whirring of wings, and voices of greeting were heard from the treetops.
Minerva looked up and asked whose tongues could have possibly spoken
so clearly, supposing the sounds proceeded from human lips.
But they came from birds. There were nine of them, roosting up in the branches,
all bemoaning their fates; they were magpies, wonderful mimics.

The Muse replied to the puzzled goddess, 'Those creatures up there
have recently joined the mass of the birds after losing a contest.
Píerus was their father, a rich landowner in Pella,
their mother Euíppe, who came from Paeónia; nine hard times
she'd gone into labour and called on Lucína, the goddess of childbirth.
Puffed in the pride of their numbers, this rabble of ignorant sisters
travelled through all the towns of Haemónia and all of Achaéa
here to Parnassus and then presented the following challenge:
"Cease to deceive the uncultured mob with your empty attractions.
If you believe in your musical gifts, Helicónian Muses,
you'll surely agree to compete with us. We say that our voices
are finer, our skill is more expert; what's more, we match you in number.
If we are the winners, you'll yield us your two Boeótian fountains;
if not, then we will surrender our home in Emáthia's plains
as far as Paeonia's snow hills. The nymphs can adjudge between us."
'Shame as it was to compete with these girls, we thought it was even
more shaming to bow to their claim. The nymphs who were chosen as jury
swore by their streams to judge fairly and took their places on benches
formed from the natural rock. Without any casting of lots,
the Píerid maiden who'd first presented the challenge began.
Her song was about the war in the sky:* she ascribed to the giants

a glory undue and belittled the deeds of the mighty gods.
The monstrous Typhon, sprung from the deepest bowels of the earth,
had struck such fear in the heaven dwellers, that all in a body
were put to flight, until in exhaustion they found a refuge
in Egypt, close to the banks of the Nile with its seven mouths.
She told how the earth-born giant had followed them even there,
so forcing the gods to conceal themselves under alien guises.
"Jupiter," said the maiden, "became a ram,* which accounts
for Libyan Ammon's representation in modern times
with his curving horns; Apollo lurked in the shape of a crow,
Bacchus a goat, Diana a cat and Juno a snow-white
cow, while Venus appeared as a fish and Mercury an ibis."
'Such was the song which the Pierid sang as she played on her lyre.
We Muses were called upon to respond – but perhaps you haven't
the time or the leisure to lend an ear to our own performance.'
'I've plenty of time,' Minerva replied, as she took her seat
in the shade of the forest. 'Now sing me your song from beginning to end.'
The Muse continued: 'Our cause was entrusted to one of our band,
Calliope.* She, with her flowing hair in an ivy wreath,
rose up and strummed a few plangent chords to test her lyre strings,
then firmly plucked them to launch at once on the following lay.

CALLIOPE'S SONG: THE RAPE OF PROSERPINA

'"My song is of Ceres, first to furrow the soil with the ploughshare,
first to give corn to the earth and nourishing food to mankind,
first to give laws; all things are the gift of bountiful Ceres.
She is my theme. I pray that my song may prove to be worthy
of this great goddess. Surely the goddess is worthy of song.
'"The enormous island of Sicily lies heaped high on the limbs
of the giant Typhon,* who dared to aspire to a throne in the heavens.
Often the monster strains and struggles to rise from his prison;
but Cape Pelórus, closest to Italy, weighs on his right hand,
Pachýnus his left, while his legs are crushed beneath Lilybaéum.
Etna presses on Typhon's head; laid out on his back,
he belches lava and vomits flame from the angry volcano.
Often he fights to shift the earth which is forcing him down
and to roll the cities and massive mountains away from his body.
The earth then goes into tremor and even the king of the shades
is afraid that the crust of the earth will crack and a chasm be opened
to let in the daylight and frighten the quivering spirits below.
It was fear of such a disaster that prompted the monarch of Hades*
to rise from his gloomy realm. In his chariot drawn by black horses

he toured round Sicily, carefully inspecting the island's foundations.
Once he'd assured himself that nothing was giving way
and his fears were dispelled, he was sighted wandering hither and yon
by Venus enthroned on her mountain of Eryx. Fondly embracing
her winged son, Cupid, she said to him: 'You, dear child, are my weapons,
my hands and the source of my power. Now take your invincible shafts
and shoot those swift-flying arrows to pierce the heart of the god
whom fortune allotted the final share in the world's three kingdoms.*
You can subdue the gods of the sky and even Jove;
it is you who vanquish the sea-gods, including their sovereign Neptune.
Why should the underworld lag behind? And why not extend
the empire of Venus and Cupid? A third of the world is at stake.
As it is, we are losing respect in heaven because we have been
too soft. Your power and prestige are diminished along with my own.
You can see that Minerva and also the goddess of hunting, Diana,
have firmly rejected me. So will the virgin daughter of Ceres,
if we allow it to happen; her hopes are the same as the others'.
Now, in the name of the power we share, if you take any pride in it,
make that goddess her uncle's wife!*' So Venus commanded.
Cupid opened his quiver. Next, at his mother's bidding,

he chose from his thousand arrows a single one, but the sharpest
and surest he had, the shaft which responded best to his bow.
Then resting his pliant weapon against his knee, he bent it,
shot the barbed reed and wounded dusky Dis in the heart.

'"Not far from the walls of Sicilian Henna you'll come to a deep lake,
Pergus by name. It is haunted by swans; you won't hear more of them
singing along the gliding streams of the river Caÿster.
The water is wreathed all round by a garland of forest, where foliage
offers an awning against the burning rays of the sun;
the branches provide a delightful coolness; the well-watered soil
is a flowery carpet of Tyrian purple; and spring is eternal.
One day, Prosérpina, Ceres' daughter, was there in the woodland,
happily plucking bunches of violets or pure white lilies,
filling the folds of her dress or her basket in girlish excitement,
vying to pick more flowers than her friends – when Pluto espied her,
no sooner espied than he loved her and swept her away, so impatient
is passion. In panic, Proserpina desperately cried for her mother
and friends, more often her mother. Her dress had been torn at the top,
and all the flowers she had picked fell out of her loosened tunic,
which only served to increase her distress, poor innocent girl!
Her abductor was off in his chariot, urging the horses forward,
each by his name, and shaking the rust-dyed reins of their long-maned

necks. They galloped across deep lakes and the pools of Palíca,
reeking with sulphur and boiling up through a crack in the earth,
to Sýracuse, where the Bácchiadae* from the isthmus of Corinth
had built a new city between two harbours, the great and the smaller.
'"Syracuse boasts two springs, Arethúsa and Cýane, either
side of a bay that is almost enclosed by narrow promontories.
This was the place where Cyane lived, most famous of all
the Sicilian nymphs, who also gave her name to the fountain.
She rose from the midst of her pool as far as her waist and recognized
whom the god was abducting. 'Halt where you are!' she cried.
'You cannot take Ceres' daughter without her mother's permission.
You ought to have asked for her hand, not stolen her. I was loved,
if I may compare the small to the great, by the river Anápis;
but I was won not by terror like her but by prayer and entreaties.'
So speaking, Cyane stretched her arms to the right and the left
and barred the way forward. Containing his anger no longer, Pluto
roared at his fearsome steeds, then brandished his royal sceptre
with all the strength of his arm and hurled it into the depths
of the pool. As it struck the bottom, it opened a tunnel to Hades.

'"Cyane, deeply distressed by the goddess' abduction and also
the trespass against her spring, felt inconsolably hurt.
She brooded in silence and wasted away in her tears to nothing,
dissolving into the water she'd lately ruled as its guardian
spirit. Her limbs grew sodden, her bones started to bend,
her nails let go of their firmness. First to melt were her slightest
features: the dark green hair, the fingers, the legs and the feet –
it doesn't take long for the slenderer members to change into waves
of chilly liquid. The next to go were her shoulders and back,
her sides and her breasts, as they vanished away into insubstantial
rivulets. Nothing solid remained, when lastly the lifeblood
coursing her weakened veins was taken over by water.

'"Meanwhile Proserpina's mother anxiously searched for her daughter
over the world, by land and by ocean, but all to no purpose.
Neither the dewy dawn nor the evening star ever found her
at rest. She lit two torches of pine in Etna's volcano
and bore them in either hand to illumine her sleepless way
through the darkness of frosty night. When the stars were dimmed by the kindly
day, she continued the quest for her child from west to east.
Tired by her journey, she wanted to drink and hadn't yet moistened
her lips at a spring, when she happened to notice a straw-roofed cottage
and knocked on its humble door. Out came an old woman, who looked
at the goddess and, when she had asked for some water, provided a sweet brew

sprinkled with toasted barley. As Ceres drank what she gave her,
an insolent, coarse-looking boy strolled up in front of the goddess,
burst into laughter and jeered, 'What a greedy female you are!'
Deeply insulted, she rapidly threw what was left of her drink
in the prattling idiot's face and drenched him in barley mixture.
His soaking cheeks were instantly covered in spots, and his arms
were transformed into legs. As his body changed, it acquired a tail
and shrank to a tiny size which made it comparatively harmless,
shorter in length than the smallest lizard. Bewildered and weeping,
the poor old woman attempted to catch this extraordinary thing,
but it scampered away into hiding. The name that we give it derives
from the patterning found on its skin: we call it the star-speckled newt.
'"Listing the lands and the seas where the goddess went on her travels
would take too long. No countries were left for her to explore.
At last she returned to Sicily; there, in the course of her wanderings,
she came to Cyane's pool. If the nymph had not been transformed,
she'd have told the whole story. But much as she wanted to tell it,
her lips and her tongue were gone and she had no means of expression.
Evidence, though, could be pointed out. Proserpina's girdle,

well known to her mother, had accidentally dropped into Cyane's
sacred pool and still lay floating on top of the water.
Once she recognized this, as if the truth of her daughter's
abduction had dawned on the goddess at last, she wildly tore
at her unkempt hair and beat on her breasts again and again.
She still did not know where Proserpina was, but she cursed every region
on earth as ungrateful and ill deserving her gift of the crops –
Sicily most of all, where she'd finally found the traces
of what she had lost. And so she savagely wrecked the ploughs
that furrowed the soil in Sicily's fields. Her bitterness drove her
to slaughter the cattle and farmers alike. She instructed the fields
to default on the dues that they owed, and blighted the fruits of the earth.
Sicily's worldwide fame as a fertile country was ruined
and given the lie: as the first shoots sprang from the earth, they would perish
at once, destroyed by the scorching sunshine or torrents of rain;
stars and the winds had a baleful influence; birds would greedily
gobble the seed as it fell on the soil; while the harvest of wheat
was choked by the thistles and tares and the indestructible twitch grass.
'"Then the nymph whom the river Alphéüs had loved, Arethusa,
raised her head from her waters and, brushing her streaming locks
away from her forehead, she said: 'Earth mother, you've searched for your maiden

daughter throughout the world. Abandon the endless struggle
and calm your anger against the land which has served you so faithfully.
Sicily's free from blame; she wasn't happy to witness
your child's abduction. It's not for my native country I'm pleading
as I am a foreigner here; I was born at Pisa in Elis.
But Sicily is the land that I cherish above all others,
the land that I look on as home. Kind goddess, have mercy and save it!
The story of why I left Elis and crossed such a large expanse
of ocean to Syracuse here, I shall tell in a timelier hour,*
when you are relieved of your troubles and able to smile again.
This much must suffice for now: the earth opened up to afford me
a way and I was conveyed underneath its bottommost caverns,
until my head rose and I saw the stars I had missed for so long.
Then, while I was gliding under the earth in the flood of the Styx,
I chanced to set eyes down there on your own lost daughter, Proserpina.
Sad she appeared, to be sure, and the fear still showed on her face;
but yet she's the queen, the most powerful lady in all the underworld,
consort supreme to the sovereign lord of the regions infernal!'
'"Hearing these words, Proserpina's mother was long dumbfounded,
as though she were stone or struck by thunder; but when the force

of her shock was dispelled by the strength of her grief, she drove her chariot
straight to the realms of the sky. With a countenance clouded with fury,
her hair let loose, exuding malice, she stood before Jupiter,
telling him firmly: 'I've come to plead for my flesh and blood,
great Jupiter, mine and your own. If her mother merits no favours,
at least be moved as a father; and don't think any the less
of your child, I beg you, because she was brought into being by me.
Now look, the daughter I searched for so long at last has been found,
if finding means more certainly losing or merely discovering
where she is. I'm willing to bear her abduction, so long as
he gives her back. A bandit husband is hardly a match
for a daughter of yours, if she is no longer a daughter of mine.'
' "Jupiter answered: 'Your child remains a pledge of our bond
and a charge that I share with you. But please use words which accord
with the facts of the case. Lord Pluto hasn't committed a crime
but an act of love. No need for us to feel shame at the marriage,
if only you will accept it, Ceres. Setting aside
all other advantages, Pluto is Jupiter's brother, no less!
And what of the rest? He and I were allotted different kingdoms,*
but otherwise we are equals. Still, if you're so concerned
to see them divorced, Proserpina shall be restored to the heavens –
on one condition: no morsel of food must have touched her lips

while she stayed in Hades. These are the terms decreed
by the three Fates.'
'"Jupiter made his point, but Ceres was still
determined
to have Proserpina back. The Fates, alas, were
against it.
The girl had already broken her fast. While taking an
innocent
stroll in the orchard, she'd plucked a crimson fruit
from a hanging
bough; then peeling off the yellowish rind, she had
picked out
seven pomegranate seeds and crunched them between
her teeth.
No one at all observed her eating, except for one,
Ascálaphus, son of Orphne, a well-known nymph in
Avérnus
(she's said to have borne him in hell's dark woods to
her lover Ácheron*).
Seeing, he turned informer and cruelly prevented
Proserpina's
homeward return. The queen of Érebus* wailed in
distress
and transformed the tell-tale witness into a bird of ill
omen.
Sprinkling his hateful face with a handful of
Phlégethon* water,
she turned it into a beak with feathers and great round
eyes.
Removed from his former self, he was mantled in
tawny wings.
His body grew into his head and his nails into long
hooked talons.
Scarcely ruffling the plumage which lay on his
motionless arms,
he was changed to an odious bird, the prophet of
doom and sorrow,

the indolent screech-owl, a dreadful portent to all
mankind.

'"Ascalaphus surely deserved the reward that he won for
his tattling.
But strange to tell, Achelóüs' daughters, the Sirens,* were
given
the feet and feathers of birds, though they kept the faces of
girls.
How so? Perhaps these maidens, renowned for their
prowess in singing,
were there with Proserpina while she was picking her
springtime flowers.
After they'd searched in vain for their mistress throughout
the world,
in order to show the sea how deeply they felt their
bereavement,
they prayed for the power to cross the waves on wings for
their oars.
The gods were kind, and the suppliants suddenly found that
their limbs
were covered with golden plumage. But lest their
beguilingly soothing
singing should die and so much musical talent be wasted,
the Sirens retained their maiden faces and human voices.

'"Jupiter settled the conflict between his brother and
grieving
sister by splitting the rolling year into equal parts:
Proserpina now, as the only divinity common to both
realms,
spends six months* on the earth with her mother and six
with her husband.
Once she returns, her heart is so light and her face is so
happy.
A moment ago, she'd have struck even Pluto as sad, but
now

she is glowing with radiant smiles, like the sun which was formerly hidden
behind a blanket of rain clouds and then emerges victorious.

CALLIOPE'S SONG: ARETHUSA

'"Now that her daughter was safely recovered, bountiful Ceres
was tranquil enough to ask Arethusa why she had fled
from her birthplace and how she'd been changed to a sacred fountain. The waves
fell still as the goddess rose from the depths of her pool; then wiping
the water away from her dark green locks, she began the tale
of how she had once attracted Alpheüs, the river of Elis.
'I was one of the nymphs,' she said, 'whose home is Achaea.
None was more active than I in scouring the forest glades
or spreading the hunting nets; but although I never set out
to be famed for my beauty, brave as I was, I was always known as
"that beautiful girl, Arethusa". The praises rained on my comely
person gave me no pleasure. Where others are proud of their bodies,
I blushed like a rustic and thought it a crime to be seen as attractive.
'"'One day, I recall, I was travelling back from Stýmphalus'* forest.
The heat was doubly oppressive as hunting had made me exhausted.

I came on a stream which was perfectly still and perfectly silent,
transparent down to the bed (you could count each one of the pebbles),
you'd never believe it was flowing. Silvery willows and water-fed
poplars provided a natural shade for the sloping banks.
I approached the brink and, to start with, put my feet in the water,
then waded in up to my knees. It wasn't enough. Untying
my girdle and tossing my soft clothes on to the branch of a willow,
I plunged in totally naked. And while I was wildly thrashing
and flailing around with my outflung arms in the folds of the river,
I suddenly heard, deep down in the stream, a peculiar murmur.
Startled I made for the nearer bank and jumped out quickly.
"Where are you going so fast, Arethusa?" the voice of Alpheüs
came from his waters. "Where are you going?" he hoarsely repeated.
Just as I was, completely undressed, as my clothes had been left
on the farther bank, I fled. This made him more eager to chase me;
and since I was naked, I must have appeared more his for the taking.
The faster I ran, the hotter the river-god pressed on the trail,
as doves will flee from a menacing hawk on their fluttering wings
and the menacing hawk will fly on the tail of the fluttering dove.
'"'I ran as far as Orchómenus, Psophis and on to Cyllêne.
Across the valleys of Maénalus, cold Erymánthus and Elis*

I kept on running, so hard that Alpheüs could never
catch up.
But I was less strong than he was and couldn't survive
such a lengthy
pursuit; his endurance was greater. Still, over the plains
and the tree-covered
mountains, the rocks and the cliffs, and places without
any tracks
I continued to run. The sun was behind me; I saw a
long shadow
looming in front of my feet – unless it was terror that
saw it.
At least I could hear the frightening sound of his
pounding footsteps
and feel the blasts of his panting breath on the ends of
my hairbands.
Overcome by the effort of running, I cried to Diana,
"Help! I am caught – your own dear nymph, who
carried your weapons,
to whom you so often entrusted your bow and quiver
of arrows!"
The heart of the goddess was stirred. She brought
down one of the clouds
and threw it around me. No sooner had I been
enshrouded in mist
than the river-god prowled and searched in bafflement
round the cloud.
Twice he unknowingly circled the spot where the
goddess had hidden me,
twice he called out, "Arethusa, my love! Arethusa,
where are you?"
How do you think I felt? Like a lamb on hearing the
howling
of wolves by the fence of the fold? Or a cowering hare
in a thorn-bush,
watching the dogs' fierce muzzles, not daring to make
any movement?

Alpheüs remained where he was; there weren't any
footprints leading
onwards and so he concentrated his eyes on the cloud.
Cold sweat poured down my beleaguered limbs, and the
blue-tinged drops
streamed over my body. I moved my foot and a pool seeped
out.
My hair was dripping with moisture and, faster than I can
describe it,
I changed into water. But now the river-god saw that the
stream
was the nymph that he loved. He dropped the human guise
he'd assumed
and reverted to water in order to be united with me.
Diana quickly created a cleft in the earth, and I plunged
down
through its murky recesses until I arrived at Ortýgia,*
isle that I love, called after my patron Diana and first
to welcome me back to the upper air in Syracuse harbour.'

CALLIOPE'S SONG: TRIPTOLEMUS AND LYNCUS

'"Arethusa's story was ended. The goddess of all the crops
now harnessed her twin snakes on to her chariot, fastened
their bridles
and launched herself through the air between the sky and
the earth,
till she brought her flying car down in the city of Pállas
Athéne.
Here she handed it over to young Triptólemus'* charge,
with orders to sow the seeds that she gave him, partly in soil
which had never been tilled and partly in fields which had
long lain fallow.
Triptolemus then took off and soared over Europe and
Asia,

until he landed on Scythian soil, where the ruler was Lyncus,
whose palace he entered. Asked where he came from, his reason for coming,
his name and his country, he answered: 'My country is far-famed Athens.
My name is Triptolemus. As for my coming, it wasn't by ship
or on foot overland; I travelled instead through the open sky.
I am bringing you gifts from Ceres. Now scatter these seeds all over
your fields to return you a fruitful harvest of nourishing food.'
The barbarian king was filled with envy; he wanted the credit
himself for this marvellous gift. So he welcomed Triptolemus under
his roof and, once his guest was asleep, he crept to his bedside,
dagger in hand. As he raised his weapon to stab him, Ceres
turned him into a lynx and commanded the youth from Athens
to drive his sacred chariot-team once more through the air."

THE DAUGHTERS OF PIERUS

'Our leader Calliope here concluded her brilliant recital,'
went on the Muse who was telling Minerva about the contest.
'The nymphs were agreed on their verdict: the victory should go to Helicon's
Muses. The losers responded by raining abuse. "So it isn't

enough," I then interposed, "that your challenge has won
you a trouncing.
No, it appears that you feel the need to add insult to injury.
Since, moreover, our patience has come to an end, we had
better
follow the course which our anger dictates and proceed to
punish you."
All that the nine Piérides did was to laugh and make light
of my threatening words. As they tried to continue their
shouting and screaming
and brandished their fists, they suddenly noticed that
feathers were sprouting
out of their nails and their arms were growing a cover of
plumage.
Looking at one another, they saw hard beaks stiffen out
of their faces. A novel species of bird was joining the forest.
Wanting to beat their breasts, they flapped their arms and
were lifted
into the air, where they hovered, the scolds of the
woodlands, magpies.
Even today they preserve their original gift of the gab
as raucous, chattering birds* with a limitless passion for
talking.'

BOOK 6

The theme of divine punishment for mortal presumption continues through the first four stories (1–400), though each is distinctive in its character. In *Tereus* (412–674) the gods fade into the background and Ovid embarks on his series of metamorphoses arising from relationships between human beings, some of them of a very strange kind.

Minerva is the link with Book 5 and we begin with another contest, this time between the goddess herself and the mortal *Arachne* (1–145), who has challenged her skill in weaving. The story is characterized more sharply than the dispute between the Muses and the Pierides. There is an enjoyable scene in which Minerva, disguised as a crone, tempts Arachne into further arrogance. Other excellent features are Ovid's accounts of spinning and weaving; the descriptions of the two competing tapestries (see Introduction, pp. xxiv–xxv); and, naturally, the detail of Arachne's transformation into the spider.

Niobe (146–312), who boasted that she had more children than the goddess Latona, was a famous tragic figure and prototype of perpetual mourning in Greek literature and art. Ovid tells her story in fairly down-to-earth terms. Her gross arrogance is amusingly satirized in her address to the Theban crowd; and we may also admire Ovid's narrative skill as he disposes of her seven sons, one by one, followed by the seven daughters. Rather less is made of the queen's final metamorphosis into a weeping mountain crag.

In *The Lycian Peasants* (313–81) Latona features less as an avenging deity and more as an injured victim of Juno's persecution, who is then treated very rudely and unkindly by a

group of uncouth peasants. Here we have another lively story, culminating delightfully in the peasants' transformation into frogs. Less delightful is the disgusting description of the flayed *Marsyas* (382–400), who has lost to Apollo in a piping contest.

The story of *Pelops* (401–11) seems to provide a thematic transition. His dismemberment by his father Tantalus had incurred the punishment of the gods; and it also prefigures the dismemberment of Itys in *Tereus*. Pelops' restoration with an ivory patch on his shoulder evidently counts as a metamorphosis.

A darker quality altogether pervades the long *Tereus, Procne and Philomela* story (412–674), and some may find it the most sinister and unpleasant tale in the whole poem. The lust of the barbaric Tereus for his innocent sister-in-law from Athens is very powerfully developed; and we cannot help being moved by the ironical pathos of Pandion's speech as he entrusts his daughter Philomela to the treacherous Thracian. Violence attends sex in the ensuing action. The detail of the brutally raped Philomela's excised tongue is almost ludicrously gruesome; but we can perhaps enter more fully into the spirit of Procne's rescue of her sister and the horrible revenge which she and Philomela take on the abominable Tereus. The metamorphosis of the three characters into birds, which formally justifies Ovid's inclusion of this story, has little emotive value when it comes.

The book ends in rather more agreeable mode. In *Boreas and Orithyia* (675–721), the Thracian north wind forcibly abducts another Athenian girl; but Boreas' aggression is more boisterous than sinister, and the outcome resulting in the birth of Zetes and Calaïs is presented as positive. A heroic note is sounded in the concluding image of the Argonauts' quest for the Golden Fleece – which takes us on to Book 7.

ARACHNE

Minerva, who'd lent an attentive ear to the Muses' narration,
Commended their song and their justified anger against the Piérides.
Then she said to herself: 'Is praising enough? I also
need to be praised in turn. No mortal shall scoff at my power
unpunished.' She therefore considered how best to dispose of a Lydian*
girl, called Aráchne,* who claimed (so she'd heard) to equal herself
in working with wool. Arachne's distinction lay not in her birth
or the place that she hailed from but solely her art. Her father, Idmon
of Cólophon, practised the trade of dyeing wool in Phocaéan
purple;* her mother was dead but, like her husband, had come
from the people. Their daughter, however, had gained a high reputation
throughout the Lydian towns for her work with wool, although
she'd been born in a humble home and lived in a village, Hypaépa.
The nymphs used often to leave their haunts, Mount Tmolus' vines
or the banks of the river Pactólus, to gaze on Arachne's amazing
artistry, equally eager to watch her handwork in progress
(her skill was so graceful) as much as to look at the finished article.
Perhaps she was forming the first round clumps from the wool in its crude state,

shaping the stuff in her fingers and steadily teasing the cloud-like
fleece into long soft threads. She might have been deftly applying
her thumb to the polished spindle. Or else they would watch her embroider
a picture. Whatever she did, you would know Minerva had taught her.
Arachne herself, in indignant pride, denied such a debt.
'Let us hold a contest,' she said. 'If I'm beaten, I'll pay any forfeit.'
Minerva disguised herself as a hag* with hoary locks
and hobbled along with a stick to support her tottering frame.
She spoke at once to Arachne. 'Not all old age's effects',
she said, 'are to be despised; experience comes with the years.
So take a little advice from me: you should aim to be known
as the best among humankind in the arts of working with wool;
but yield the palm to Minerva, and humbly crave her forgiveness
for boasting so rashly. The goddess will surely forgive if you ask her.'
Arachne looked at her sullenly, left the threads she was spinning
and almost hit her rebuker. With anger written all over
her face, she made her response to the goddess she'd failed to recognize:
'Leave me alone, you stupid old woman! The trouble with you
is you've lived too long. You can give your advice to what daughters you have
or the wives of your sons. I'm clever enough to advise myself.
Don't think your warnings have done any good. I'm set on my course.

Why doesn't Minerva arrive in person? She's shirking this contest!'
'She's here!' the goddess exclaimed, as she dropped her disguise as a crone
and appeared as Minerva. At once the nymphs and the Lydian women
paid suitable homage. Only Arachne remained unafraid,
but she did turn red and her cheeks were suffused with a sudden, involuntary
blush which soon disappeared, as the sky glows crimson at early
dawn and rapidly whitens again in the rays of the sunrise.
She still refused to withdraw. In her crass determination
to win, she fell to her ruin. Minerva accepted her challenge
and offered no further warnings; the contest could start at once.
Straightaway they both set up their looms in different places.
Each loom was carefully strung with the slender threads of the warp.
The warp was attached to the crossbeam, a stick separated the threads,
and the weft could then be inserted between them by pointed shuttles,
drawn over and under by hand, and tapped into place as the wooden
comb with its notches between the teeth was sharply lowered.
The two contestants made haste; with robes hitched up to the girdle,
they moved their experienced arms, the labour lightened by pleasure.
Webs were woven in threads of Tyrian purple dye
and of lighter, more delicate, imperceptibly merging shades.

Think how a tract of the sky, when the sun breaks suddenly through
at the end of a rain shower, is steeped in the long, great curve of a rainbow;
the bow is agleam with a range of a thousand various hues,
but the eye cannot tell where one fades into another; adjacent
tones are so much the same, though the difference is clear at the edges.
Such were the colours the two contestants used in the fabric.
Their patterns were also shot with flexible threads of gold,
as they each spun out an old tale in the weft of their separate looms.
Minerva depicted the rock of Mars* on the heights of Cecrops
and wove the ancient dispute concerning the name of the land.
The twelve Olympians, Jove in their midst, with august dignity
sat upon lofty thrones. Each of the gods was denoted
by typical features. The image of Jove was proud and majestic.
Neptune, the god of the ocean, was shown on his feet and striking
the rugged crag with his great long trident, while sea-water gushed forth
out of the cleft in the rock, to establish his claim to the city.
Minerva characterized herself by her helmeted head,
her sharp-pointed spear, her shield and the aegis guarding her breast.
The picture suggested the earth had been struck by the goddess's spear
to produce the olive tree covered with berries and grey-green foliage.
The gods looked on in amazement, and victory crowned her endeavour.

So that Minerva's rival could have some clear indication
of what reward to expect for such crazily reckless defiance,
four contests were added, one in each of the web's four corners,
all in their own bright colours, with smaller designs for the detail.
One corner was filled by Thracian Haemus and Rhódope,* snow-clad
mountains today but formerly mortals, a brother and sister
who'd claimed the titles of Jove and Juno. The second corner
contained the pitiful fate of a mother, the queen of the Pygmies,*
who'd fought against Juno and lost; the goddess transformed her into
a crane and made her declare perpetual war on her own tribe.
Antígone* featured third, one more who had dared to compete
with great Jove's consort but later been punished by queenly Juno
and changed to a kind of bird. It sadly counted for nothing
that she was the Trojan king Laómedon's daughter. Instead
she applauds herself with the clattering bill of a white-feathered stork.
The fourth and remaining design showed Cínyras* in his bereavement,
embracing the temple steps which had once been the limbs of his beautiful
daughters, and seeming to weep as he lay prostrate on the marble.
Minerva finally added a border of olive branches,

symbol of peace, so using her tree to complete the tapestry.
Arachne's picture* presented Europa seduced by Jove
in the guise of a bull; the bull and the sea were convincingly
real.
The girl appeared to be looking back to the shore behind
her,
calling out to the friends she was leaving, afraid of the
surging
waves which threatened to touch her and nervously lifting
her feet.
Astérië also was shown, in the grip of a struggling eagle;
Leda, meekly reclining under the wings of the swan.
And there was Jove once again, but now in the form of a
satyr,
taking the lovely Antíope, sowing the seeds of her twins.
You could see how he caught Alcména disguised as her
husband Amphítryon,
then how he stole fair Dánaë's love in a shower of gold;
how he cheated Aegína as fire; Mnemósyne, dressed as a
shepherd;
Prosérpina, Ceres' child and his own, as a speckled
serpent.
Neptune's affairs were also revealed in Arachne's
tapestry.
He changed to a menacing bull to possess the daughter of
Aéolus;*
taking the shape of the river Enípeus, he fathered the giant
son of Alóeus; he posed as a ram to confuse Theóphane.
Ceres, the bountiful mother of crops, with her golden
tresses,
knew the god as a horse; snake-haired Medúsa, who bore
the winged horse Pégasus, knew a winged bird; and
Melántho a dolphin.
All these scenes were given authentic settings, the persons
their natural likeness. There was Apollo, dressed as a
farmer,
shown as wearing the wings of a hawk or the skin of a lion,

and fooling the daughter of Mácareus, Isse, disguised as
a shepherd.
Bacchus, appearing as counterfeit grapes to deceive
Erígone;
Saturn, as one more horse who fathered Chiron the
centaur.
The outer edge of the tapestry, fringed by a narrow
border,
was filled with flowers all interwoven with tendrils of
ivy.
Not Pallas, not even the goddess of Envy could
criticize weaving
like that. The fair-haired warrior goddess resented
Arachne's
success and ripped up the picture betraying the gods'
misdemeanours.
She was still holding her shuttle of hard Cytórian
boxwood
and used it to strike Arachne a number of times on the
forehead.
The wretched girl was too proud to endure it, and
fastened a halter
around her neck. She was hanging in air when the
goddess took pity
and lifted her up. 'You may live, you presumptuous
creature,' she said,
'but you'll hang suspended forever. Don't count on a
happier future:
my sentence applies to the whole of your kind, and to
all your descendants!'
With that she departed, sprinkling the girl with the
magical juice
of a baleful herb. As soon as the poison had touched
Arachne,
her hair fell away, and so did the ears and the nose.
The head
now changed to a tiny ball and her whole frame
shrunk in proportion.

Instead of her legs there are spindly fingers attached to her sides.
The rest is merely abdomen, from which she continues to spin
her thread and practise her former art in the web of a spider.

NIOBE

The whole of Lydia buzzed with the news. The story was spread
through Phrygia's towns and discussed in the wider regions beyond.
Now Níobe, queen of Thebes, before she was married, had known
Arachne; she'd lived as a girl in Maeónia near Mount Sípylus.
Still, her compatriot's ugly fate hadn't served as a warning
to show the gods that she knew her place and to speak of them humbly.
She'd many causes for pride: she was pleased with her husband Amphíon's
skill on the lyre, their shared high birth and the broad extent
of their regal power. But nothing gave her so much satisfaction
as all the children she had. Yes, Niobe would have been known
as the happiest mother on earth, if only she had not thought it
herself. One day, Teirésias' daughter, the prophetess Manto,
stormed through the streets of Thebes in a state of divine possession,
loudly proclaiming: 'Isménian women, flock together,
and hurry with wreaths of bay in your hair, to offer incense
and reverent prayers to the goddess Latóna and her two children.*

Latona speaks through my lips!' Her command was obeyed, and every
woman in Thebes adorned her forehead as Manto had bidden.
Incense was cast on the altar flames and prayers were uttered.
Here on the scene comes Niobe, flanked by a throng of attendants,
splendidly dressed in a gold-embroidered Phrygian costume,
lovely as far as her anger allowed. Majestically tossing
her handsome head with its unbound hair flowing over her shoulders,
she halted. Then, loftily gazing round with an arrogant air,
she exclaimed: 'What madness is this to prefer the gods you have only
heard of to one you can see? And why should worship be paid
at Latona's altar, when I have never been honoured with incense?
I am the daughter of Tántalus, the only mortal ever
permitted to feast with the gods.* My mother's sisters are Pleiads,
her father was Atlas, the giant who carries the sky on his shoulders.
My other grandsire is Jove, who is also my husband's father.
The tribes of Phrygia hold me in fear. The walls of this city
were built to the sound of Amphion's lyre, and I with my husband
govern the Theban people. I'm mistress in Cadmus' palace.
Wherever I turn my eyes in my house, a profusion of riches
confronts my gaze. My beauty, moreover, is surely divine.

Now add to these glories my seven daughters and seven sons
and to them, very soon, their seven husbands and seven wives.
Then answer this question: haven't I every cause to be proud?
And yet you presume to rank me below Latona, the daughter
born to some Titan called Coëüs – Latona, who couldn't obtain
the meanest refuge on earth when about to give birth to her children.
Your goddess could find no home in the sky or the sea or on land.
Exiled from the world, she wandered, until she inspired some pity
in Delos, who said to her, "You are a homeless stranger on land,
as I am on sea," and sheltered her there in his shifting island.*
Latona then bore two children, one seventh the number of mine.
I am undeniably blessed; and blessed I'll continue to be,
without any doubt. My abundance assures me I'll always be safe.
I am far too important a person for fortune's changes to harm me.
However much I am robbed, far more will be left to enjoy.
My blessings are such that I've nothing to fear; supposing a fraction
of all this people, my children, could ever be taken away,
my losses could never reduce me to only two, the magnificent
crowd Latona can boast, so near to making her childless!
Away with you, women, abandon your sacrifice, off with your laurel-wreaths!'
All discarded their wreaths and left their worship unfinished,

but no one could stop them invoking Latona under their breath.

The goddess was deeply angry. High on the top of Mount Cynthus
she said to her twins, Apollo her son, and Diana her daughter:
'Outrageous! I, your mother, so deeply proud to have borne you,
The goddess who yields to no other but Juno, am hardly a goddess
at all, it appears! My children, unless you help, I'm excluded
from all the altars where I have been worshipped since time began.
To fuel my fury, Tantalus' daughter has now compounded
her impious conduct with insults. She dares to consider her children
superior to you and has called me childless – I hope that her insult
recoils on her head! Her unbridled tongue is as bad as her father's.'*
Latona was going to add her prayers to this furious indictment,
when 'Stop!' interrupted Apollo. 'Complaining merely delays
her punishment.' Phoebe agreed. So they rapidly glided down
through the air and, veiled in a cloud, alighted on Cadmus' citadel.
Close to the walls there extended a level and open plain,
which was constantly pounded by galloping horses; a host of clattering
chariots and hammering hooves had softened the clods underneath them.
Here it happened that two of Amphion's seven sons

had mounted their sturdy steeds and, firmly seated on trappings
of Tyrian red, were curbing their coursers with golden bridles.
One of the pair, Isménus, the first whom his mother had carried
inside her womb long ago, was riding his racehorse round
the circular track and straining hard on the foaming bit,
when a flying arrow went through his breast and he suddenly uttered
a cry of pain. The reins were dropped from his dying hands,
and slowly he slipped sideways to the ground from his mount's right shoulder.
Close by, his brother Sípylus heard the sound of the rattling
quiver and gave full rein to his horse, like a terrified captain
running before a storm on sight of a cloud, and unfurling
all of his sails so as not to miss the lightest of breezes.
Sipylus gave full rein, but the inescapable arrow
caught up with the rider. The quivering shaft held fast in the nape
of his neck, while the naked point stuck out of the throat in front.
Already slumping forwards, the youth pitched over the mane
to be trampled by galloping hooves and to stain the earth with his warm blood.
Phaédimus, luckless youth, and Tantalus, heir to his grandfather's
name, had followed their usual ride by going across
to join their peers in the wrestling school and had oiled their bodies.
Then while the brothers were tussling away and locked in a tight clinch,
breast against breast, Apollo's bowstring was drawn and a single
arrow was driven right through the pair of their grappling frames.

Together the poor lads groaned; together, bent double by pain,
they heavily fell to the ground; together they turned their eyes
once more to the sun from the earth; and together they breathed their last.
Alphénor saw this calamity. Beating his breast till it bled,
he rushed to embrace the cold dead bodies and lift them up,
and died in performing this duty of love. The god of Delos
impaled him too, with the deadly point deep down in his chest.
After the shaft was pulled out, a piece of his lungs was torn
away on the barbs and the blood gushed out of the wound as he died.
But one wound wasn't enough for the handsome boy, Damasíchthon.
He had been struck on the lower leg, in the soft and sinewy
patch at the back of the knee. As he tried to extract the weapon,
a second arrow transfixed his throat right up to the feathers.
This was expelled by the force of the blood, which spurted and darted
out, and a hole was bored in the air by the leaping jet.
Ílioneus died last. He had raised his arms in a useless
appeal and cried, 'You gods, I pray to you all conjointly'
(he wasn't aware that he needn't appeal to all of the gods),
'Spare me, I beg you!' The god of the bow was touched – but his shaft
was already beyond recall. Still, Ilioneus had the gentlest

death. The point had entered his heart, but not very deeply.
Rumour of trouble, the people's grief and the tears of her family
made the mother aware that disaster had suddenly struck.
The queen was appalled that it could have occurred, and incensed that the gods
had dared to do such a thing and taken their rights so far.
(The brothers' father, Amphion, already had driven a sword
through his heart; in death he was rid of his grief as he was of the daylight.)
This was a different Niobe, far from that arrogant woman
who'd lately driven the crowd away from Latona's altars
and proudly marched through the middle of Thebes with her head held high.
She was envied before by her friends, but now her foes would have pitied her.
Throwing herself on the cold dead bodies, she frantically covered
each of her sons with her final kisses; then turning away,
she lifted her poor bruised arms to the heavens and boldly exclaimed:
'Now feed on my pain, hard-hearted Latona, and feast your heart
to the full on my sorrow! The biers which carry my seven sons
are my own cortège. Rejoice and be glad in your cruel victory!
Victory? No! In my grief I have more than you in your joy.
Although you have murdered all of my sons, I can still outshine you!'
She ended her speech, and a bowstring twanged. All quaked in terror,
except for one. It was Niobe, bold in her tragic misfortune.
Her daughters were standing in robes of black, with their hair let down,
before the biers of their brothers. One was removing the arrow

lodged in Alphenor's heart when she fainted on top of his body
and died. Another, while trying to comfort her grieving mother,
went suddenly silent, doubled up by a wound from an unseen
archer. A third collapsed as she vainly attempted to flee,
and a fourth expired on her sister's body. One more was in hiding,
another was visibly trembling. Now six of the sisters had died
of their different wounds, and the last remained. Then Niobe, standing
in front of her daughter with robes outspread, called out to Latona,
'Leave me but one – and the smallest! Of my great number of children
I beg you to spare me the smallest, I beg you to spare me *one*!'
But while she was praying, the girl she was praying for died. Then childless,
she sank to the earth by the corpses – her sons, her daughters, her husband –
and there, in her sorrow, her body grew rigid. No lock of her hair
could stir in the breeze, her complexion was bloodless, the eyes never moved
in that sad, sad face. There wasn't a sign of life in her features.
The palate inside her mouth went hard, and even her tongue
was frozen and stiff. The blood could no longer course in her veins.
She had lost the power to incline her neck, or to raise an arm,
or to walk on her feet; and her inner organs were turned to stone.

Yet her weeping goes on. In the swirl of a mighty wind she was swept
away to her native land. There, set on a mountain summit,*
she pines to this day, and the tears trickle down the crag of her cheeks.

THE LYCIAN PEASANTS

Latona had made her anger plain to the whole of Thebes.
Everyone, man and woman, was filled with fear and worshipped
the mighty mother of twins with greater devotion than ever.
Recent events, as so often occurs, reawakened the telling
of earlier stories. One said: 'This also happened a while
ago in fertile Lycia's fields, where the peasants rejected
Latona, much to their cost. The story isn't well known
as the people were humble folk, but it's strange enough to be told.
I have been to the place in person and seen the pool which the wonder
made famous. My father had asked me to fetch some particular cattle
from there; he was now an old man, unable to travel far,
so he gave me a Lycian guide, with whom I was crossing the pastures,
when there, in the midst of a pool, an ancient altar was standing,
blackened with sacrifice embers and ringed by quivering reeds.
My companion stopped in his tracks and said in a terrified whisper,
"Be gracious to me!" "Be gracious," I timidly whispered myself.
I ventured, however, to ask my guide whether this was an altar

to Faunus, the naiads or one of the local gods; and he answered,
"Young man, this altar does not belong to a mountain deity.
No, it's the home of the goddess who once was excluded by Jupiter's
consort from all of the world, whose prayers were barely answered
by shifting Delos, still an aimlessly floating island.
In Delos, pressing against a palm and Minerva's olive,
Latona gave birth to her twins, despite their stepmother's malice.
From Delos also, the story goes, when her labour was over,
she fled from Juno, the pair of baby gods in her arms.
Quite soon she arrived in Lycia, home of the monstrous Chimaéra,
tired and exhausted. The heat of the sun which was scorching the fields
had caused her to wilt, she was parched with thirst, and her hungry babes
had sucked all the milk from her breasts. Then, chancing to look ahead,
she saw a lake with a little water down in a valley.
Country folk were at work there, cropping the bushy osiers,
rushes and sedge that you find in a marsh. Latona went up
and knelt on the ground to slake her thirst with a cooling drink.
The rabble of peasants told her to stop, so the goddess said to them:
'Why must you stop me drinking? Water belongs to everyone.
Nature never intended the sun or the air or the flowing
streams to be private. I'm simply here for my common right.

Yet I beg you upon my knees to allow it. I wasn't attempting
to wash my weary limbs in this pool, but merely to quench
my thirst. As I speak, my mouth is dry and my throat is
parched;
my words can hardly be heard. A drink of water would be
pure nectar. Indeed, you'll have saved my life if you give me
water.
Look at these babes in my arms! Have mercy, they're
stretching their arms out!' –
so the children by chance were doing. Who could have been
so heartless as not to be touched by the moving pleas of the
goddess?
The men still wouldn't allow her to drink. They shouted
abuse,
and warned her with threats to retire from the pool and to
keep her distance.
To add to their kindness, they even disturbed the water
itself
with their hands and feet, and spitefully stirred the soft and
swirling
mud right up from the bottom by jumping wildly about.
Latona's anger made her forget her thirst for the moment.
She refused to humble herself any longer before these louts
or to plead any more for kindness in such an ungoddesslike
manner.
She raised her hands to the heavens and cried, 'May you live
in your filthy
pool for ever!' Her prayer was answered. The peasants'
delight
is to be under water, now plunging the whole of themselves
to the bottom,
now popping their heads out, sometimes swimming close to
the surface.
Often they'll stay on the bank in the sun and often jump
back
to the cool of the water. But even today they continue to
wag

their tongues in loud and unseemly arguments; shameless as ever,
although they are under the water, they'll try to indulge in abuse.
Their voices too have gone hoarse; their throats are inflated and swollen;
their noisy quarrels have stretched their jaws to a hideous width.
Their shoulders rise to their heads as their necks appear to have vanished;
their backs are green, while their huge protruding bellies are white.
They leap about in the muddy pool transmuted to frogs.'"

MARSYAS

After the Theban had told this story about the demise
of the Lycian peasants, another recalled the horrible punishment
dealt to the satyr who'd challenged Latona's son to a piping
contest and lost. 'Don't rip me away from myself!' he entreated;
'I'm sorry!' he shouted between his shrieks, 'Don't flay me for piping!'
In spite of his cries, the skin was peeled from his flesh, and his body
was turned into one great wound; the blood was pouring all over him,
muscles were fully exposed, his uncovered veins convulsively
quivered; the palpitating intestines could well be counted,
and so could the organs glistening through the wall of his chest.

The piper was mourned by the rustic fauns who watch over the woodlands,
his brother satyrs, the nymphs and Olympus, the pupil he loved,
by all who tended their flocks or herds on the Lycian mountains.
Their tears dropped down and saturated the fertile earth,
who absorbed them deep in her veins and discharged them back to the air
in the form of a spring. This found its way to the sea through a channel,
which took the name of the Mársyas, clearest of Phrygian rivers.

PELOPS

The people rapidly turned from these tales to talk of their present
misfortunes and mourned for Amphion, destroyed with all of his children.
The mother was generally hated and blamed; but still she was wept for
by one, it is said – by the grief-stricken Pelops, who tore his garments
away from his breast and exposed the ivory patch on his shoulder.
This shoulder, the left one, was normal flesh at the time of his birth
and a match with his right. But later his father dismembered the boy,*
and the gods (so they say) reassembled the limbs. The rest was recovered,
and only the part which unites the neck with the upper arm
had been lost. A piece of ivory set in the empty space*
could serve the purpose as well, and Pelops was fully restored.

TEREUS, PROCNE AND PHILOMELA

Princes in neighbouring towns rallied round, and kings were urged
by their cities to travel to Thebes and offer their deepest sympathy.
Argos and Sparta were represented; Mycénae, afterwards
ruled by the sons of Pelops; Cálydon, long before
it incurred the wrath of Diana;* fertile Orchómenus; Corinth,
known for its bronzework; warlike Messéne, Patrae, low-lying
Colónae, Pylos and Troézen, not yet governed by Píttheus;
with all the other towns to the north or south of the Isthmus.
You mightn't believe it, but only the city of Athens defaulted.
Duty was thwarted by war, as barbarian hordes had crossed over
the seas and were striking fear inside the Mopsópian walls.
These hordes were dispelled through the military aid supplied by Téreus,
the Thracian king, whose victory won tremendous acclaim.
Since Tereus was wealthy, backed by a powerful army, and also
happened to trace his descent from mighty Mars, Pandíon,
the king of Athens, forged an alliance by giving his daughter,
Procne, to him in marriage. The wedding wasn't attended
by Juno as bridal matron, the Graces or jovial Hymen.

Furies provided the escort with torches snatched from a funeral;
Furies prepared the nuptial couch; and a sinister screech-owl
swooped on the palace and came to rest on the roof of the bedroom.
These were the omens that marked the union of Procne and Tereus,
the union which brought them a child. Congratulations were offered,
of course, by Thrace; and the couple themselves gave thanks to the gods.
They decreed a holiday marking the day of the year when Pandion's
daughter was married to noble Tereus and so gave rise
to the birth of Itys. How blind we are to our genuine blessings!

Five autumns had come and gone in the course of the sun's revolutions,
when Procne coaxingly said to her lord, 'If you love me at all,
please send me to visit my sister, or ask her to visit us here.
You can promise my father it won't be long before she returns.
To see my sister again would be such a wonderful present!'
Tereus ordered a ship to be launched. His sails and his oarsmen
carried him safely towards Piraéus, the harbour of Athens.
As soon as he entered the royal presence, the kings clasped hands,
and on that propitious note negotiations were opened.
Tereus had started to broach the request from his wife which had brought him
to Athens, and promise the sister's speedy return from her visit,

when fair Philoméla arrived on the scene, very richly attired,
but even richer in beauty, just like the naiads and dryads
we hear of pacing the forest glades in stately procession,
if one can imagine them dressed in the robes and jewels of a princess.
The sight of this pure young woman made Tereus hot with desire,
like fire which a farmer sets to the yellow-white corn in a field
or the piles of leaves and the hay that are stored in a barn for the winter.
That beautiful face was enough to excite him; but Tereus was also
pricked on by his lustful nature, confirmed by his countrymen's proneness
to sexual indulgence – a Thracian as much as a personal weakness.
His instincts inclined him to bribe his target's watchful companions,
to sweeten her faithful nurse to connivance and woo Philomela
herself with extravagant gifts, if it cost him the whole of his kingdom;
or else to abduct her and fight for his prize in a fierce campaign.
Ensnared in the toils of unbridled desire, he'd commit any crime
in the world; he couldn't control the flames that were raging inside him.
Waiting was not to be borne any more. He repeated the message
from Procne with fervour and used her prayers to forward his own.
Passion enhanced his powers of persuasion. Whenever his arguments
went too far, he claimed to be urging the wishes of Procne.

He even burst into tears, as though they were part of the
message.
Heavens above, how blind some mortals can be to the
darkness
of evil! As Tereus pursued his wicked designs, he passed
for a model husband; his infamous treachery stood to his
credit.
What's more, Philomela supported his pleas. She tenderly
fondled
her father's shoulders and begged him to sanction this
voyage to her sister's,
a voyage for the good of her health, she said – for her ruin,
more likely!
As Tereus watched, his hands strayed mentally over her
body.
He eyed her kissing Pandion, her arms encircling his neck.
Her every action served to provoke, to inflame and to
feed
his lust. Each time Philomela embraced her father, he
wished
that she were *his* child – though his thoughts would not
have been any less sinful.
Pandion was swayed by his daughters' prayers. Philomela
delightedly
thanked him, believing, poor soul, that she'd won the day
for herself
and her sister, when tears and disaster were lying ahead for
them both.
The sun god's labours were nearing an end, and his
chariot steeds
were galloping down the western sky to the waves of the
ocean.
A royal banquet was spread and the wine flowed freely in
golden
goblets. Then all, feeling pleasantly full, retired to their
beds.
But the king of Thrace couldn't sleep. The desire Philomela
had kindled

continued to rage. As he thought of her face, her hands and her sensuous
movements, his fantasy pictured the parts of her body he'd not yet
gazed on, feeding the flames of the passion which kept him awake.
Dawn broke; and as Tereus was leaving, Pandion grasped his son-in-law's
hand and committed his precious charge with tears in his eyes:
'I entrust Philomela to you, dear son. Her sisterly kindness
has won me over. The two of them wanted it, so did you.
Tereus, I trust you, you're one of the family. Please, in the name
of the gods I implore you, watch over my child with a father's love,
and return her soon – she's the comfort and balm of my anxious old age –
as soon as you can, for to me one day will seem like a lifetime.
And you, my darling – your sister's absence is sadness enough –
if you care for your father at all, Philomela, come back to me soon.'
As he made this appeal, Pandion repeatedly kissed his child,
and his tears betrayed the tender emotion behind his entreaties.
To confirm their promise, he took their hands and joined them together,
begging them not to forget to give his love to his absent
daughter and grandson. His voice was choked by his sobs as he stammered
his last farewells from a heart tormented by fear and foreboding.

Once Philomela was safely on board the bright-coloured ship,
as the crew pushed off from the land and were rowing out of the harbour,
Tereus cried out, 'I have won! My prayers are answered, she's sailing
beside me!' Triumphant, the vile barbarian scarcely could wait
for his moment of bliss, and his greedy eyes never swerved from his prey,
like an eagle closely watching the hare it has caught in its crooked
talons and dropped in the nest high up where it cannot escape.
The end of the journey at last! They had disembarked from the wave-worn
ship and landed in Thrace, when Tereus dragged Philomela
up to a stone hut hidden away in an ancient forest.
White and shaking in abject terror, she tearfully asked him,
'Where is my sister?' But now she was trapped. His ugly intentions
were all too clear. His virgin prize was alone, and he brutally
raped her. Helpless, she screamed in vain for her father, she screamed
for her sister, and called above all on the gods to come to her rescue.
She trembled and shook, poor girl, like a frightened lamb that's been mauled
in a grey wolf's jaws but let go and is not yet sure of her safety;
or like a white dove, escaped on her blood-drenched wings from a hawk,
still shuddering, still afraid of the greedy claws that have gripped her.
But soon Philomela's senses returned; she tore her dishevelled

hair, she scored her arms with her nails like a woman in grief
and cried with her hands outstretched: 'You cruel barbarian! How could you
do such a dreadful deed? Were you wholly unmoved by my father's
entreaties and tears of devotion, my sister's longing to see me,
respect for my maiden virtue and what you owed to your wife?
Nature is overthrown! Now I am my sister's rival,
you are married twice over and Procne must be my enemy.
Why don't you take my life for good measure, you treacherous monster?
I dearly wish you had murdered me first, before you so vilely
assaulted my body! At least my ghost would be pure and innocent.
Still, if the powers of heaven can see, if there's any authority
left in the skies, if everything else is not lost with my honour,
sooner or later I'll have my revenge. All shame forgotten,
I'll tell the world of your crime myself. If I'm given the chance,
I'll cry it aloud in the marketplace; and if you still hold me
prisoner deep in the forest, my words will ring through the trees;
the rocks will know and be moved to pity by what I have suffered;
the sky will listen and so will the gods, if any exist there.'
These threats excited the brutal tyrant to violent rage,

and his fear was just as extreme. Spurred on by his anger and terror,
he moved his hand to his belt and drew his sword from the sheath;
then grabbing the girl by the hair, he twisted her arms behind her
and fastened her wrists in a rope. At the sight of his sword Philomela
was praying to die, and freely presented her throat to be cut.
Her tongue was still voicing her sense of outrage and crying her father's
name, still struggling to speak, when Tereus gripped it in pincers
and hacked it out with his sword. As its roots in the throat gave a flicker,
the rest of it muttered and twitched where it dropped on the blood-black earth;
and like the quivering tail of an adder that's chopped in half,
it wriggled and writhed its way to the front of its mistress' feet.
Even after this crime, though the story is scarcely believable,
Tereus debauched that bleeding body again and again.
To crown these atrocious acts, he coolly went home to Procne.
As soon as she saw her husband, she asked for her sister; but Tereus
groaned in pretended grief and invented a story to make her
believe Philomela was dead. His weeping succeeded, and Procne
ripped from her shoulders her shining robe with its golden border
and swathed her body in black. She erected an empty tomb,

presented funeral gifts to the shade of the sister she thought
was dead, and mourned for a fate which was actually worse than death.

A year went by as the sun passed through the signs of the zodiac.
Poor Philomela was helpless: her guards precluded escape,
the walls of the hut were firmly constructed of solid stone,
and her speechless lips couldn't tell the truth of her barbarous treatment.
But suffering sharpens the wits and misfortune makes one resourceful.
She craftily strung a warp on a primitive Thracian loom,
and into the pure white threads she wove a message in purple
letters revealing the crime. When the piece was completed, she handed it
over to one of her sister's women and gestured her orders
to put it at once in her mistress' hands. The woman then took it
to Procne as bidden, with no idea of what it contained.
The wife of the merciless tyrant unrolled the woven material,
only to read the pitiful story of what had befallen
her very own sister. Amazing to tell, she said not a word.
All speech was choked by her grief. The words that she needed weren't there
to express her outrage. Tears were forgone, as she rushed to confound
all right and all wrong. Her heart was totally set on revenge.

Now to the time when the women of Thebes, every two years, join
in the worship of Bacchus. Their sacred rites are conducted at night,
and darkness reigns when the cymbals are clashed in the glens of Mount Rhodope.
Darkness attended the queen of Thrace as she stole from the palace,
dressed for the bacchic ritual and armed with the weapons of frenzy:
vine leaves crowning her hair, dappled fawnskin carefully arranged
to hang on the left side, thyrsus lightly at rest on her shoulder.
Storming up through the woods with a crowd of her women behind her,
Procne in terrible rage, inspired by the frenzy of anguish,
mimicked the frenzy of Bacchus. At last she arrived at the lonely
hut. With screams and ecstatic cries she broke the doors down
and seized her astonished sister; then dressing her up in a bacchanal's
costume and hiding her features under an ivy garland,
she dragged Philomela along till they came to the walls of the palace.
As soon as she sensed that she'd entered the doors of that house of wickedness,
poor Philomela shuddered and turned as white as a sheet.
Procne then found a place to remove the bacchic disguise
and expose her miserable sister's face, still covered with shame.
As she tried to embrace her, the girl she had rescued was quite unable
to look her straight in the eyes, since she felt she had cheated her sister.
With head downcast, Philomela wanted to swear in the name

of the gods that nothing but force could have made her incur such appalling
disgrace, and showed by her hands what her speechless lips could not tell.
Then Procne, herself inflamed by an uncontainable fury,
rebuked her sister for weeping and said: 'This isn't the moment
for tears! It's a sword that we need or a still more powerful weapon,
if one is available. I, dear sister, will stop at nothing.
I for one am prepared to apply a torch to the royal
palace and throw the treacherous Tereus into the flames;
or else I'll cut out his tongue and his eyes and lop the offending
organ which raped you. I'll deal his body a thousand wounds,
till his guilty life is expelled. I've a terrible vengeance prepared –
though I'm not yet sure what it is.' As Procne was weighing her choices,
Itys entered and gave his mother the clue she was seeking.
Gazing with pitiless eyes on her son, 'How like your father
you are!' she said. That was all. She knew at once the terrible
thing that she had to do, as she seethed with the fury inside her.
The boy, however, ran up and delightedly greeted his mother,
holding his little hands out to throw his arms round her neck.
While he kissed her and whispered, 'Oh darling mother, I love you so much!'
her natural feelings were stirred and her anger abated a moment;

her eyes were moist as she failed to control her unsettling emotions.
But once she saw that maternal claims were making her purpose
waver, she turned away from her child to the face of her sister,
then looking at each in turn, she reflected: 'Should Itys be able
to say that he loves me, when poor Philomela has lost her tongue?
He can call out to his mother, but she cannot call to her sister.
Oh Procne, think who you're married to, then remember your father!
Be true to your birth! It's a crime to be true to a husband like Tereus.'
She waited no longer, but dragged off Itys, just like an Indian
tigress dragging a suckling fawn through the forest thickets,
till they all three came to a room far off in the echoing palace.
Itys saw they were going to kill him and stretched his arms out;
'Mother, mother!' he screamed, as he tried once more to embrace her.
But Procne picked up a sword and stabbed her son in the side
of his chest without turning away. Though the blow on its own was enough
to murder the child, Philomela then used the weapon to cut
his throat. While his limbs were warm and retained some vestige of life,
they tore him apart. The chamber was running with blood as the pieces
bobbed in a bubbling cauldron or loudly spluttered on skewers.

This was the feast to which Procne coolly invited her husband
(the man knew nothing of what had occurred or what was in store).
Pretending to follow a family custom, with only the master
attending the rite, she excluded the servants and other attendants.
So Tereus sat on the throne of his fathers high on a dais
and started to gorge himself on a dish of the fruit of his own loins.
Blind to the truth, he actually called out, 'Go and fetch Itys!'
Procne couldn't conceal her malevolent joy any longer.
Bursting to tell him herself of the crushing blow she'd inflicted,
she said to him, 'Itys is with you already – inside.' So Tereus
looked round and asked where he was; when he called once again for his son,
Philomela leapt forward, just as she was, her hair besprinkled
with blood from the crazy carnage, and Itys's gory head
was tossed in his father's face. She had never wanted so much
to be able to speak and to voice her joy in a paean of triumph.
The Thracian king, with a terrible cry, kicked over the table
and summoned the snake-haired Furies to come from the vale of the Styx.
One moment he longed to open his breast, if only he could,
and expel the gruesome banquet of flesh already half eaten;
at another he wept and spoke of himself as his poor son's tomb;

at the next he was chasing Pandion's daughters around with his naked
sword. You could picture the fugitives' bodies suspended on wings.
And they *were* suspended on wings. The one, transformed to a nightingale,
made for the forest, the other flew up to the roof as a swallow;*
but badges of murder remained on their breasts in the blood-tinged plumage.
Tereus, swiftly impelled by his grief and thirsting for vengeance,
also changed to a bird, with an upright crest for a headpiece
and beak jutting out to a monstrous length in the place of his long spear,
looking as if he were armed for battle. We call him the hoopoe.

BOREAS AND ORITHYIA

Grief for his daughters despatched Pandion to Hades before
his time. The throne of Athens was then assumed by Eréchtheus,
a king renowned for his justice no less than his prowess in warfare.
Erechtheus begot four princely sons and as many daughters,
including two who were equally beautiful. Procris* was married
to Céphalus, Aéolus' grandson; and Orithýia* was loved
by the north wind, Bóreas. Hatred, however, for Tereus and all
the Thracians, who live in the north, impeded his suit for a long time,
while he preferred to press it with soft words rather than brute force.

When gentle wooing proved unsuccessful, his temper was ruffled;
the god reverted to anger, his all too characteristic
mood, and he said: 'My failure's deserved! Why haven't I used
my proper weapons of fury and strength or my menacing anger,
instead of these futile entreaties which only do me discredit?
Force is my natural way. How else are the gloomy storm clouds
driven along, the waves churned up, or the knotty oaks
overturned, the snows packed hard or the earth's tracts pounded with hail?
I am the god who confronts my brother winds in the open
sky, where my battleground is. The thrust of my power in the fray
is such that our clashes are signalled by thunderclaps high in the air,
and the lightning fires leap forth, forced out of the void in the clouds.
I am the god who forces my way through the vaulted passages
deep in the caverns of earth. When I violently heave with my shoulders,
I trouble the ghosts and the whole of the world with my rumbling tremors.
That was the proper way to have courted my bride. Erechtheus
should not have been kindly asked but *made* to give me his daughter.'
With boisterous words like these, or others of similar fury,
Boreas beat the air with his powerful wings, and a howling
blast swept over the earth and ruffled the breadth of the sea.

As he trailed his dusty mantle across the peaks of the mountains,
he scoured the land; then, shrouded in darkness, the lover enfolded
his Orithyia, all trembling with fear, in his tawny pinions.
During their flight, the flames of his passion grew yet more strong;
and the kidnapper's journey across the sky continued unchecked,
until he arrived at the walls where the Cícones tribes were settled.
There the Athenian girl and the king of the frost were united,
and Orithyia became the mother of twins, who resembled
herself in other respects but were furnished with wings like their father.
Yet these, we are told, weren't part of the twins at the time of their birth;
before the golden down could be seen on their youthful cheeks,
Zetes and Cálaïs still were unfledged; but later, along with
their beards, the feathers started to sprout on the sides of their bodies,
as though they were birds. So when they had grown from boys to men,
they joined the Mínyae, sailing across the unexplored main
in the Argo, first of all ships,* on the quest for the Golden Fleece.*

BOOK 7

Almost half of this book (1–403) is concerned with *Medea*, the princess of Colchis, who used her magic arts to help Jason and the Argonauts to win the Golden Fleece and was later rejected by her heroic lover for a socially more advantageous marriage. Ovid was clearly fascinated by Medea as a character and, like Euripides in Greek, wrote a tragedy in Latin about her which is sadly lost to us. He also owed a great deal to the *Argonautica* by Apollonius of Rhodes (third century BC).

In the *Metamorphoses* Ovid describes Medea falling in love with Jason and gives her a grand dramatic soliloquy (12–71) which shows her torn between her passion and her duty to her father. Once she and Jason are committed to each other (74–99), the poet focuses on the incidents in the story which involve transformations. When Jason has yoked the fire-breathing bulls, he sows the dragon's teeth, which (as in the Cadmus story 3.104–30) produce armed warriors when sown in the earth (120–58). Medea then uses her magical powers benevolently to rejuvenate Jason's father *Aeson* (159–296) and malevolently to destroy Jason's wicked uncle *Pelias* (297–349). In all these exciting episodes the figure of Medea as a powerful sorceress clearly fires Ovid's imagination, rhetoric and powers of detailed description. By contrast, *Medea's Flight* (350–403) is in a much lower key: it offered the poet scope for a display of geographical learning and for a long series of mini-metamorphoses, only one of which (Cycnus, 371–9) is at all interesting.

Medea's landing at Athens and marriage to Aegeus allows Ovid the chance to include the king's son *Theseus* and his heroic exploits in the narrative (404–52). Soon we are introduced to

Minos, king of Crete, who is planning to make war on Athens and approaches *Aeacus*, king of the island Aegina, for help (453–500). Aeacus, however, prefers to side with the Athenians, who also send him a delegation led by the old hero Cephalus. Although his own people have been recently depleted by the appalling *Plague at Aegina* (501–613b), they have subsequently been restocked by *The Birth of the Myrmidons* (614–60), a new generation achieved by the miraculous transformation of ants occupying a sacred oak tree into an army of young fighters. In his brilliant account of the plague, Ovid (like Lucretius and Virgil in similar passages before him) will have returned to the famous description of the great plague at Athens by the Greek historian Thucydides (late fifth century BC). Though the detail is derivative, the passage is one of the finest in the whole poem.

The book ends with a tale in a totally different vein and genre altogether, the tragic love story of *Cephalus and Procris* (661–862). Cephalus, the Athenian envoy at Aegina, is asked to explain the history of the spear he is carrying. He tells how it had been given to him in his youth as a present by his wife, Procris, but it had destroyed them both. The story which Ovid inherited from others is somewhat bizarre, but the poet makes it strangely convincing, and the relationship between the two devoted lovers is movingly explored. The main theme is the destructive power of jealousy, first on the man's side towards the woman and then on the woman's towards the man. The physical metamorphosis (of a dog and a giant vixen to rock) is incidental, but the idea of change runs deeper in its application to human feelings, mutual trust and even personality (note especially 720–22).

An abrupt coda (863–5) reminds us that the aged Cephalus is in Aegina to find allied troops for Athens's protection against Minos.

MEDEA AND JASON

Behold the Argonauts ploughing the sea on their voyage
from Greece!
Behind them was Thrace, where they'd seen King
Phíneus, blind and impoverished,
passing a bleak old age, and Bóreas' twins had routed
the Harpies who'd tortured that wretched old man by
snatching his food.
After many adventures under their captain, Jason,
they finally came to the muddy stream of the
swift-flowing Phasis.
On reaching Aeëtes' palace, they laid their claim to the
Golden
Fleece,* and the king dictated his terms to the heroes, a
series
of hard and dangerous tasks. Meanwhile, his daughter
Medéa
fell deeply in love with the handsome Jason. Despite a
long struggle
against her feelings, her reason was powerless to master
her passion.*
'It's useless to fight, Medea,' she said. 'Some god is
against you.
This, or something akin to it surely, is what they call
love.
How else should I find my father's conditions
excessively harsh?
For certain they are too harsh. How else should I fear
for the life
of a man I have only just seen? – But *why* should I feel
so afraid?
How wretched I am! I *must* extinguish the fire which is
raging
inside my innocent heart. I should be more sane, if I
could!

I am dragged along by a strange new force. Desire and reason
are pulling in different directions. I see the right way and approve it,
but follow the wrong. I am royal; so why should I sigh for a stranger,
or ever conceive of a marriage which takes me away from my home?
Love can be found here too. It rests in the lap of the gods
whether Jason survives or is killed. – But I want him to live! I don't
have to love him to pray for that. What crime has Jason committed?
Only a cruel and heartless person could fail to be struck
by his youthfulness, breeding and courage. And who could be blind to his handsome
looks, if he lacked all else? *My* heart, at least, has been stirred.
But unless I assist him, those fire-breathing bulls will blast him to ashes;
the warriors sprung from the seeds which he sows in the earth will fight
and destroy him; or else the greedy dragon will make him its prey.
If I can allow all this, I'll confess that I'm born of a tigress,
confess that my heart is composed of nothing but rock and steel. –
Oh, why don't I watch him dying and so infect my eyes
with the taint of the spectacle? Why don't I shout to the fire-breathing bulls
or the earth-born brutes or the sleepless dragon to charge and attack him? –
O heavens, grant me better than that! Yet better is not
to be idly prayed for but done! – By me? Is it truly better
that I should betray my king and my father, that some tall stranger

should owe his life to my kind assistance, only to thank me,
the woman who saved him, by spreading his sails to the wind without me,
marrying somebody else and leaving Medea to be punished?
If he can do such a thing and prefer a rival to me,
the ungrateful traitor can die! – Yet when I think of that face,
of that noble, heroic soul, of that strong and beautiful body,
I cannot fear he'd be false or forget my help. To make certain,
he'll give me his word in advance and I'll force him to swear to our pact
in the name of the gods. All's safe; there is nothing to fear. So be done
with delay, and to action! Jason will always be in my debt.
The rites of the wedding torch will unite us. In all the cities
of Greece great throngs of women will praise me for saving their sons. –
What now? Shall I sail away on the wind and abandon my father,
my brother, my sister, the gods and soil of my native country? –
Why shouldn't I leave such a heartless father, a barbarous land
and a brother who's only a child? My sister's prayers go with me.
The greatest of gods is alive inside me! I'll not forsake greatness
but rather pursue it: the glory of saving the sons of Greece,
the knowledge of better lands and of cities with arts and civilized

customs, whose fame is proclaimed in climes as distant as this;
and lastly my Jason, the man for whom I would gladly surrender
all the treasures of earth. When I am his wife, they will call
me happy, beloved of the gods, and I'll rise to the stars in my glory!
What of those mountainous rocks* that are rumoured to clash in the ocean?
What of Charýbdis, who threatens the ships by swallowing up
the waves, then spewing them forth? And what of the ravening Scylla,
whose girdle of savage dogs barks over the sea of Sicily?
Clinging to what I love, held tightly to Jason's breast,
I can brave any voyage, however long. With him in my arms
I'll be frightened of nothing, or else my fears will be all for my husband. –
Your husband? Be careful, Medea. Are you using respectable words
to cover your evil designs? No, no! Face up to the terrible
wrong you're about to commit and recoil from the guilt while you may!'
She ended. Now virtue, daughterly feeling and maidenly conscience
had come to the fore. Desire, now vanquished, was in retreat.

Medea then made her way to the ancient altar of Hécate,
goddess of spells, far off in the depths of a shadowy grove.
Her purpose was firmly set and the flame of her love had subsided,
when Jason appeared on the scene and the fire which had died was rekindled.
A blush came over her cheeks and the whole of her face glowed hot.
As a tiny spark that is hidden under a pile of ashes

is fanned and fed once again by the wind and grows to recover
its earlier strength, so the love you might have supposed was dwindling
and dying away flared up when she saw young Jason before her.
That shining morning it chanced that the son of Aéson was looking
more handsome than ever. Medea could hardly be blamed for her passion.
Her gazing eyes were fixed on his face, as though she had never
seen it before. 'It must be a god who is standing there,'
she thought in her madness, unable to turn her body away.
But when the stranger began to speak and, suddenly gripping
her right hand, begged in the humblest of tones for her help and promised
to make her his wife, Medea burst into tears and replied:
'I see what I'm doing; so if I am cheated, I cannot blame ignorance,
only my love. You shall owe your life to the help that I give you.
Be sure that you keep your promise!' He swore by the rites of the threefold
goddess* and all the power which haunted that sacred wood;
he swore by his future father's father, the all-seeing sun god,*
by all the successes he hoped for and all the dangers he feared.
Medea believed him. At once she gave him some magical herbs,
then explained how to use them; and Jason returned to his tents with a light heart.

The next day's dawn had driven the glittering stars from the sky.
By the sacred field of Mars the people of Colchis were gathered
and standing to watch on the hills; enthroned in their midst King Aeëtes,
garbed in his purple robe and wielding an ivory sceptre.
There were the bronze-hooved bulls! They were breathing fire from their steely
nostrils and scorching the grass on the plain with the force of their hot breath.
Loudly they roared like a blacksmith's furnace filled to the full,
or the sizzling sound of the molten stone from a builder's limekiln
igniting when sprinkled with running water. A noise as tremendous
came from the chests of the bulls, while the flames rolled round in the prison
inside them and then poured forth from their burning throats. But Jason
calmly went forward to face them. The great beasts angrily turned
their ferocious heads to meet his advance and levelled their iron-tipped
horns; they pounded the dusty earth with their cloven hooves
and vomited clouds of smoke as they filled the air with their bellowing.
The Argonaut sailors were rigid with terror; but Jason approached,
not feeling the fiery blasts, so potent the herbs that preserved him.
He daringly stroked the bulls with his hand on their pendulous dewlaps,
then placing a yoke on their necks, he forced them to draw the heavy

weight of a plough and cut a path through a virgin plain.
The Colchians watched in amazement, while all the
Argonauts cheered
and encouraged their captain, who took the teeth of
the Theban dragon*
out of a golden helmet and scattered them into the
furrow.
These seeds, being steeped in a virulent poison,
softened the earth,
and the sown teeth started to grow and assume a new
kind of body.
Just as a baby takes human shape in its mother's womb
and the different parts are arranged inside to compose
one whole,
which doesn't emerge in the outside world till it's fully
developed,
so when the ripened form of a man was complete in the
womb
of the pregnant earth, he rose from the fertile soil to
the surface
and, even more wonderful, clashed the weapons which
came up with him.
Seeing these warriors aiming to cast their
sharp-pointed spears
at Jason's head, his companions lowered their eyes in
dismay.
Even Medea, who'd made him safe, was quaking with
fear.
As she watched that army advancing towards their
solitary target,
her face turned suddenly pale and she sat in a frozen
trance.
In case the herbs she had given him proved too feeble,
she chanted
a spell for his extra support and called on her secret
devices.
Jason then hurled a gigantic rock right into the midst

of his foes, and repelled their attack by making them fight
with each other.
The earth-born soldiers died of the wounds they received
from their brothers,
as though they had fallen in civil war. With cheers of
rejoicing
the Greeks swarmed round the victorious hero and hugged
him tightly.
The princess of Colchis would also have liked to embrace
the victor,
but modesty would not permit it. She merely exulted in
silence,
and offered thanks for her spells to the gods of her magical
powers.*
Jason's remaining task was to use Medea's herbs
to drug the unsleeping dragon, who guarded the golden
tree
in the pride of its towering crest, its three-forked tongue
and its hooked fangs.
After he'd sprinkled the monster with juice of a herb from
the Lethe,
repeating a spell three times to induce a motionless
slumber,
a spell which could calm a troubled sea or a river in spate,
sleep finally settled on eyes which had never known it, and
Jason
was able to capture the Golden Fleece. Then, proud in his
spoil
and bearing a further prize in the woman who'd helped him
to win it,
the hero returned with his bride to Iólcos' harbour in
triumph.

THE REJUVENATION OF AESON

In Thessaly mothers and aged fathers brought gifts to the gods
in thanks for their sons' return; the altars were laden with incense
which melted over the flames; the promised victim with gilded
horns fell under the axe. But Aeson, the father of Jason,
could play no part in the general rejoicing; the tired old man
was nearing the end of his life. His son then said to Medea:
'I grant, dear wife, that you've saved me from death; you have given me all,
and the sum of your many kindnesses truly passes belief.
Yet I ask, if your magical powers can do it – and what can they not? –
Subtract a few of my years to add to the years of my father.'
He couldn't restrain his tears. Medea was moved by the loyal
devotion which prompted this plea, and remembered the father she'd falsely
betrayed and abandoned. Without confessing these feelings, she answered,
'Dear husband, how could you suggest such a crime? Do you truly think
that I could ever transfer a part of your life to another?
Hecate wouldn't allow it and you should never have asked.
But still, my Jason, I'll try to do you an even greater
favour than what you are begging. I'll use my arts to prolong

your father's years without lessening yours, if only the three-formed
goddess will help and support this daring attempt with her presence.'
Three nights had still to go by before the horns of the moon
could meet in a perfect orb. When it shone at last in its fullness,
and gazed on the earth below with all its glory restored,
Medea stole out of the palace. Her robes hung loosely about her,
her feet were unshod and her unbound hair flowed over her shoulders.*
All on her own, in the deadly stillness of deep midnight,
she followed her wandering path. Other people, the birds and the beasts
were softly buried in sleep. Not a sough could be heard in the hedgerows;
the leaves were silent and still; silent the dank air; motionless
all but the twinkling stars. Extending her arms to the spheres,
she turned full about three times; three times she sprinkled her head
with water drawn from the stream; three times she opened her lips
to utter a piercing cry; then, kneeling down on the hard earth,
prayed: 'O night, most faithful keeper of secrets; you golden
stars who companion the moon in succeeding the fires of the day;
Hecate, three-formed goddess, who knows of my deep designs
and comes when invoked to assist the spells of skilful magicians;
earth, who yields all enchanters the potent herbs for their witchcraft;

breezes and winds of the air, you mountains, rivers and lakes,
gods of the forest and gods of the night, be here with me all!
By your aid, whenever I will, to the banks' amazement, the rivers
return to their fountain-heads. By your aid, I can quieten the troubled
seas or ruffle their calm with my spells. By your aid I can banish
the clouds or cause them to gather; I summon and scatter the winds.
With my incantations I force fanged serpents to split their skins;
I dislodge the rocks and uproot the trees, shift forests and order
the mountains to tremble, the earth to rumble and spirits to rise
from their graves. I can draw the moon from the sky, no matter how loudly
the cymbals may clash* to avert it; the Sun, my grandfather's chariot,
pales at my song and my poisons can rob the Dawn of her colour.
At my request, you deities blunted the force of the fire-breathing
bulls and bowed their heads underneath the weight of the hooked plough;
you forced the brood of the dragon's teeth to savage each other;
and after you closed the eyes of the sleeplessly vigilant serpent
who guarded the gold, you stole it away and restored it to Greece.
Now I have need of the juices to make an old man in his weakness
recover his youthful strength and return to the bloom of his prime.

You will grant them, I know. The stars are not twinkling so brightly in vain,
and it must be at your command that my chariot, drawn by winged dragons,
is ready to take me' – and there stood her car, sent down from the sky.
As soon as she'd mounted and stroked the bridled necks of her serpents,
she gave a shake to the slender reins and was swept to the sky,
from where she looked down on Thessalian Tempe and steered her dragons
to places she knew would provide her with herbs. Mount Ossa and Pélion,
Othrys, Pindus, Olympus, the highest mountain of all,
were crossed and explored. When she found what she wanted, she either plucked it
up by the roots or cut it away with a curved bronze sickle.
Much that she needed could also be found on the banks of the river
Apídanus, or the Amphrýsus, or else by the streams of Enípeus;
Penéüs, the waves of Sperchéüs, the reedy shores of Lake Boebe,
all contributed plants; and Medea discovered a special
grass for long life in Boeótian Anthédon, facing Euboéa,
a city later renowned for the transformation of Glaucus.*
Nine days, nine nights went by as, drawn by her team of winged dragons,
she roamed the whole of the region to gather those herbs of renewal;
and then she returned. The dragons had only inhaled the scent
of the plants, but their skins were old with the years and they sloughed them off.
On reaching the palace, she halted outside the doors and the threshold,

with only the sky to cover her head; and avoiding her husband's
embraces to keep herself pure, she built two altars of green turf,
one on the right to Hecate, one on the left to the goddess
of Youth. When she'd twined these round with branches and leaves from the woodland,
she dug two pits in the earth close by, and started her ritual
sacrifice. First she plunged her knife in the throat of a black-fleeced
victim, whose blood was allowed to flow in the open trenches.
Then, as she tipped a bowl of honey to add to the liquid,
followed in turn by a chalice of milk still warm from the udder,
she chanted her incantation and called on the spirits of earth
together with Pluto, the king of the shades, and his stolen consort,
to wait before they purloined the life in the old man's body.
Now that she'd soothed these gods with her long, low-muttered petitions,
she ordered the servants to carry the feeble body of Aeson
outside; then intoning a spell till sleep had fully relaxed him,
she laid him out, as though he were dead, on a bed of herbs.
The old king's son and attendants were ordered to stand far off
and not to look with unhallowed eyes on her secret mysteries.
All dispersed as she bade. With hair flowing loose, like a bacchant,

Medea circled the blazing altars; she dipped two split-wood
torches into the trench and, once they were steeped in the
sheep's
black blood, she set them alight at her altars, and purified
Aeson
thrice with the fire, thrice with water and thrice with
sulphur.

Meanwhile in the brazen pot on its stand the potent elixir
was boiling, bubbling and frothing white in the rising foam.
The brew consisted of roots which Medea had cut in
Thessalian
valleys, with cornseed, flowers and juices as black as pitch;
strange stones she had fetched from the farthest east and
sand that the ocean
had washed in an ebbing tide. She had added some
hoarfrost gathered
by blazing moonlight, the wings and the flesh of an
ominous screech-owl,
guts of a wolf with the power of changing its bestial
features
to those of a man, the scaly skin of a water-snake caught
in a Libyan stream, the liver drawn from a long-lived stag,
with the eggs and head of a crow that had chattered for
nine generations.
With these and a thousand nameless objects, the Colchian
witch
was ready to work her spell transcending the powers of a
mortal.
Dipping the branch of an olive, once fruitful but long since
withered,
she stirred the ingredients up and mingled the top with the
bottom.
And look! the dry stick, circling around in the boiling
cauldron,
changed – to start with from grey to green, and then in a
short while
sprouted with leaves and was suddenly laden with fat, ripe
olives.

Whenever the foam on the fire spilt over the side of the vessel
and hot drops fell to the ground, the soil turned green and a cluster
of flowers arose on the soft, lush grass. As soon as she saw this,
Medea unsheathed her sword and drew a cut in the old man's
throat, so letting the blood drain out of his body. She then
replaced it with juice from the pot. When Aeson had fully absorbed this,
either by mouth or by way of the wound, his hair and his beard
lost all of their whiteness and quickly returned to a lustrous black.
His leanness, pallor and withered features had all disappeared;
those wrinkled and creased old cheeks filled out with their firm new flesh;
his limbs grew supple and strong. In utter amazement and wonder,
Aeson remembered himself in his young days forty years earlier.

From his home in the sky Dionýsus had watched Medea perform
this astonishing miracle. Seeing his nurses* could still be restored
to the years of their youth, he obtained this boon from the woman of Colchis.

THE PUNISHMENT OF PELIAS

Black treachery next. Medea, pretending that she and Jason
were now estranged, took refuge in Pélias' house* to implore
protection. The king himself was enfeebled by age, but his daughters
welcomed her gladly. In no time at all, their Colchian guest
had cunningly won their hearts by a show of counterfeit friendship.
Among her signal achievements Medea was careful to cite
the rejuvenation of Aeson and dwelt at some length on the details,
so planting the hope in the gullible daughters' minds that their father
could also recover the bloom of his youth with similar treatment.
This they requested and told her to name any price that she chose.
Medea was quiet for a while, as though she were still undecided,
keeping them all in suspense while she seemed to be mulling it over.
Then, when she'd promised to help them, she said, 'To prove that I really
can do what I say, I shall use the power of my magic herbs
to change the oldest tup in your flocks to a new-born lamb.'
At once the daughters brought forward a sheep, a clapped-out creature
of years untold, with its horns all twisted around its forehead.
Medea then thrust her Thessalian knife in its scraggy old throat
(the metal was hardly stained, as the blood was so thin), and plunged

the carcass into the cauldron containing her potent mixture.
The ram's frame shrunk and its years burned up along with its horns;
then a feeble bleating was heard right down in the depths of the cauldron,
and while they were all still frozen in wonder, a lamb jumped out
and friskily scampered away in search of an udder to suck.
Pelias' daughters were quite dumbfounded, and now that Medea's
claims were confirmed, they pressed their demand with greater insistence.
Three times the sun god had plunged his steeds in the streams of the Ebro*
and lifted their yokes. The fourth night came and the radiant stars
were glittering bright, when the treacherous visitor kindled a raging
fire underneath a cauldron she'd only filled with plain water
and herbs which had no effect. The king and his guards beside him
were all relaxed in a deathlike sleep, induced by the magical
power of the sorceress' tongue as she chanted her incantations.
Medea had ordered the daughters to join her inside the palace;
when all were standing around the bed, she attacked them: 'Cowards!
Why are you shrinking now? Unsheathe those swords and empty
his aged veins, so that I may refill them with youthful blood.
Your father's life and his years are now dependent on you.

If you have any daughterly love and your hopes are not
wishful thinking,
then show your father the duty you owe him and use your
weapons
to purge his old age. Release his blood with the points of
your swords!'
Lashed on by these taunts, the child whose sense of duty was
strongest
was first to betray it, avoiding guilt by committing a crime;
and so with the others. But none could look at the wounds
they were dealing;
with eyes averted, they blindly, wildly stabbed at their
father.
Dripping with blood, he still was able to lift himself up
on his elbow. Though covered with gashes, he tried to get
up from his couch
and, braving the circle of sword-points round him,
extended his pale arms.
'What are you doing, my children?' he cried. 'Who gave
you these weapons
to murder your father?' Their courage failed, and they
lowered their swords.
He would have said more, but his words were cut off by
Medea, who knifed
his throat and plunged his butchered limbs in the boiling
water.

MEDEA'S FLIGHT

If she hadn't been borne to the sky on the wings of her
dragon chariot,
Medea would surely have paid for her crime. Her flight
through the air*
took her over the woods of Mount Pelion, home of Chiron
the centaur,
then over Othrys and pastures renowned for the tale of
Cerámbus

(when Earth's huge mass was submerged beneath the tide
of the ocean,
Cerambus was lifted on wings to the sky with the help of
the nymphs
and so escaped Deucálion's flood and was rescued
from drowning).
Next, on her left, she passed the Aeólian city of Pítane,
facing the great long petrified snake* on the shore of
Lesbos;
and Ida's forests, where Bacchus protected his thieving
son
by hiding a stolen bullock within the form of a stag.
She passed where Paris was modestly buried in shallow
sand;
where Maera, transformed to a dog, once startled the
fields with her barking;
Eurýpylus' city in Cos, where the women were changed
into cows
at the time when Hercules' army was journeying home
from the Troad;
Phoębus' Rhodes and the town of Iálysos, where the
Telchínes,
magicians whose evil eye could destroy whatever they
gazed on,
were drowned in the waves of the sea by Jupiter's
powerful hatred.
She also traversed the walls of Carthaéa on ancient
Ceos,
where old Alcídamas later in time would be greatly
surprised
when a peaceful dove sprang out of the corpse of his
daughter, Ctesýlla.
Medea looked down on Hýrië's lake in the beautiful
valley
renowned for a boy called Cycnus,* who suddenly
changed to a swan.
This was the story: on Cycnus' orders, his lover
Phýlius

captured some vultures and slaughtered a lion, which he brought to his friend;
when also commanded to tame a wild bull, he had done so, but angry
because his love had been spurned so often, he wouldn't hand over
this final prize. In a fury the boy cried out, 'You'll be sorry
for this!' and jumped off a cliff. While everyone thought he had fallen,
in fact he'd been changed to a swan and was gliding on snow-white wings.
His mother Hyrië, though, unaware that her son had been rescued,
dissolved in her tears and gave her name to the pool she created.
Close by is Aetólian Pleuron, where Óphius' daughter Combe
escaped on fluttering wings from a savage attack by her children.
Next Medea set eyes on Calaúrea, Leto's island,
which witnessed the change of the king and his wife to a pair of birds.
There to the right was Mount Cylléne, the place where Menéphron
was destined to sleep in shame with his mother, as though they were wild beasts.
Far in the distance behind was the river Cephísus bemoaning
the fate of his grandson, changed to a plump wet seal by Apollo;
and there the house of Eumélus, who grieved for his wing-borne son.

At last Medea arrived in her dragon car at Pirénian Corinth; here, in the earliest times, according to ancient tradition, our human bodies grew from the rain-fed mushroom.*
But after Jason's new bride* had blazed in the poisoned robe,

and fire in the royal house had been watched each side of the Isthmus,
the wicked Medea then steeped her sword in the blood of her children.
Proud in this evil revenge, the mother escaped from the father's
wrath. She was swept through the sky by her dragons, until she entered
the fortress of Pallas at Athens, where Phene, most righteous of women,
and aged Périphas soared together as vulture and eagle;
Alcýone too could be seen, borne up on her kingfisher wings.
King Aégeus welcomed Medea, itself enough to condemn him,
but more was offered than shelter; he also made her his wife.

THESEUS AND AEGEUS

Now Theseus, whose father Aegeus had never known him, arrived;
his heroic deeds* had established peace on the Isthmus of Corinth.
Bent on his murder, Medea prepared him a potion of aconite,
brought by her earlier over the sea from the Scythian shores.
This poison is said to have come from the teeth of the monstrous dog
whom Echídna bore. Imagine a cave with a murky entrance,
inside it a sloping path up which the hero from Tíryns,
Hercules, dragged along Cérberus fastened in steel-link chains.
Persistently stopping, the dog kept blinking and turning his eyes

away from the dazzling light of the sun; in a frenzy of anger,
he filled the air with his barking from all three heads at the same time,
sprinkling the green of the fields with the white of the foam from his mouth.
This foam is supposed to have then congealed; it was fertilized
by the rich, rank soil and acquired the power of a deadly poison.
Seeing this new plant grows and thrives on a hard rock bed,
our peasant folk call it aconite, based on the Greek for a whetstone.
Such was the potion Medea had craftily given to Aegeus,
Theseus' father, to offer the son whom he thought was an enemy.
Theseus, suspecting nothing, had taken the cup in his hand,
when the old king spotted the family emblem engraved on the ivory
hilt of the young man's sword and dashed the brew from his lips.
Though Theseus' father was filled with joy that his son was safe,
he was also filled with horror that such a terrible crime
had been so closely prevented. He kindled the fires on his altars
and lavishly plied the gods with his gifts: the ritual axes
struck on the muscular necks of the bulls with their ribboned horns.
No day of rejoicing, they say, ever dawned in the city of Athens
more hallowed than that one. Elders and humbler folk celebrated
at banquets together and sang their songs as the wine inspired them:
'All praise to you, Theseus, greatest of heroes! The people in Márathon's
Plain were amazed when you slaughtered the dangerous Cretan bull.*

It is thanks to you that the farmers of Crómyon plough their fields,
unafraid of the monstrous boar; that fair Epidaúrus was rescued
when vile Periphétes who carried the club was struck to the earth;
that ruthless Procrústes* was also destroyed on the banks of Cephisus;
that Ceres' city, Eleúsis, was witness to Cércyon's* downfall.
You also disposed of the giant Sinis, that mighty abuser
of strength, who would bend two pines and lower their tops to the ground,
then release them and scatter his victim's fragments* over the land.
No Sciron* to haunt it, the path to the Léleges' city of Mégara
now lies open and safe; the robber's bones have been scattered,
but neither on land nor on sea have they found any resting place;
long tossed on the waves, and hardened by time, it is said, they were finally
changed into rocks, which will always be called the Scirónian rocks.
If we wished to count over your exploits and also declare your age,
your deeds would outnumber your years. For you, most valiant of heroes,
we offer the thanks of our people, and yours is the health that we drink!'
The cheers of the crowd and the prayers of well-wishers resounded throughout
the palace. There wasn't a corner of gloom in the whole of the city.

MINOS AND AEACUS

And yet no pleasure is ever unmingled; anxiety always
intrudes upon joy. So Aegeus' delight in his son's return
was marred by disquiet. King Minos of Crete was preparing
for war.
Though powerful on land and by sea, he was strong above
all in the anger
he felt as a father in seeking a just revenge for Andrógeos'*
murder at Athens. Moreover, he'd mustered his allies
beforehand
by scouring the sea* with the rapid fleet for which he was
famous.
Ánaphe joined his cause and the kingdom of Astypalaéa,
the former induced by his pledges, the latter by force of
arms;
low-lying Mýconos farther off; Cimólus renowned
for its chalk; then Syros, the thyme-growing island, with
low-hilled Sériphos;
Paros, famed for its marble, and Siphnos, betrayed by the
treacherous
Arne, who after receiving the gold she had greedily asked
for
was changed to a bird and even today retains her incurable
passion for gold as the black-footed, black-winged,
pilfering jackdaw.
But several islands – Olíaros, Dídyme, Tenos and
Andros,
Gýaros, and the producer of olive oil, Peparéthos* –
refused to support the navy from Crete. So Minos turned
west
and sailed to the island ruled by the Aéacid clan, Oenópia
(so the kingdom was called in ancient times, but Aegina
was how King Aéacus liked to refer to it, after his mother).
A crowd flocked down to greet the arrival of Minos,
longing

to see such a famous person. The welcome party consisted
of Aeacus' three sons, Télamon, Péleus and Phocus, the youngest.
Aeacus too, although he was slow with the weight of his years,
came out of the palace himself and enquired what Minos had come for.
Reminded at once of the son he was mourning, the king of the hundred
cities in Crete sighed deeply before he declared what he wanted:
'I ask for your help in a war of revenge for my murdered son;
I beg you to join in my mission of duty to solace the buried.'
Aeacus answered: 'I have to refuse your request. Aegina
may not be involved in your plan. No city is closer to Athens
than we are; we could not betray the treaties of friendship between us.'
Minos sadly departed. 'Those treaties will cost you dear,'
he said to them, thinking it wiser to threaten the Aeginétans
with war than to fight on the spot and waste his strength prematurely.
The Cretan galleys were still in sight of Aegina's walls,
when a ship from Athens approached full sail and entered their ally's
harbour; on board was Céphalus, bearing his country's commission.
Though many years had elapsed since Aeacus' sons had set eyes
on Cephalus' face, they knew him at once and, greeting him warmly,

conducted him into their father's palace. The aged hero,
whose handsome features preserved some marks of his youthful appearance,
entered the royal palace, holding a branch of Athenian
olive and flanked to the right and the left by two of his younger
compatriots, Clytus and Butes, whose noble father was Pallas.

THE PLAGUE AT AEGINA

After the usual exchange of introductory greetings,
the envoy delivered the message he'd brought from Aegeus in Athens,
asking for help in the terms of the treaty between their two cities,
and adding that Minos was aiming to conquer the whole of Greece.
This appeal was made with persuasive eloquence. When it was ended,
Aeacus answered, his left hand resting upon his sceptre:
'Athens, you need not ask for our help; you have only to take it.
Treat the strength of this island as yours without hesitation.
Provided my present good fortune continues – and long may it do so –
the power is there, I have soldiers in plenty and, thanks to the gods,
the time is propitious. I cannot for any good reason refuse you.'
'I trust that is so,' said the envoy. 'I pray for the growth of your city
and people. Indeed, as I landed now, I was truly delighted
when such a procession of handsome youths, all equal in age,

came forward to meet me. However, I've noticed that many are missing
from those whom I saw last time when I came as a guest to your city.'
Aeacus heaved a sigh and sadly explained what had happened:
'Earlier days of distress have been followed by happier times,
and I only wish I could tell you the end without the beginning.
But now I'll return to the start. No beating about the bush:
the friends you remember and miss are nothing but bones and ashes,
and they were only a fraction of what I lost when they perished.
'My people were struck by a terrible plague, through the anger of cruel
Juno, who hated the island that takes its name from her rival.*
So long as the illness seemed to be due to natural causes,
and other reasons for such a disaster were not yet apparent,
the battle against it was fought by our doctors. But all their skills
were of no avail; the people died and they couldn't prevent it.
In the beginning the sky weighed down on the earth in a thick, black
fog which trapped the prostrating heat in a blanket of clouds;
and throughout the time that it took four moons to wax and to wane,
the south winds blew with their sweltering currents of toxic air.
All are agreed that the springs and the lakes were also infected,

when thousands and thousands of slithering serpents
infested the untilled
fields and polluted the rivers and streams with additional
poison.
The dogs and the birds, the flocks and the herds, the beasts
of the wild
were the first to reveal the destructive power of the sudden
disease.
In blank amazement the wretched farmers looked on, as
their sturdy
oxen collapsed at their ploughs and sank in the midst of the
furrows.
The woolly sheep were bleating away in sickly tones,
when their fleeces fell off unshorn and their bodies wasted
away.
Horses once highly mettled, renowned for their speed on
the racecourse,
now brought shame on their former triumphs; old prizes
forgotten,
they groaned in their stables, waiting to die in feeble inertia.
The boar forgot he could ever be angry; the hind could no
longer
trust to her heels, and the bear was powerless to raid the
cattle.
Lethargy overtook all. The putrid carcasses lay
in the forest, the fields and the roads, and the air grew foul
with the stench;
but strange to tell, the dogs, the vultures and grizzly wolves
wouldn't touch those infected bodies, which decomposed
into liquid,
noxiously reeking and spreading contagion throughout the
country.
'The plague grew stronger and next attacked the peasants
and farmers;
it then proceeded to lord it inside the walls of the city.
First a burning sensation inside the intestines, then flushes
and short-drawn breathing were early symptoms of latent
disorder.

The tongue became rough and swollen, the lips were parted and dry
from the winds, as the pestilent air was gulped in the gaping mouth.
No one could bear to be covered with even the lightest of blankets;
people would lie in the nude prostrate on the earth, and the soil
never cooled them down but was warmed instead by the heat from their bodies.
The virulent sickness was out of control, and even the doctors
succumbed; their skills, indeed, proved fatal to those who possessed them.
The nearer a relative came to a patient, the more devoted
his care, the sooner he died himself. When hope of recovery
faded and death was perceived as the only end to their illness,
the sick would indulge their desires regardless of what might be best for them;
nothing, they knew, could do any good. All shame forsaken,
they crowded the springs and the streams and clung to the sides of the wells;
but before they could slake their thirst, their lives were quenched by their drinking.
Some were too bloated to rise to their feet and were drowned in the stream
that their tongues were lapping, though others still greedily went on drinking.
Many poor sufferers couldn't endure their beds any longer
and leapt to the floor or, if they hadn't the strength to stand,
they'd roll out of doors on the ground; and thus each person would flee

from the hearth and home which seemed to them now to be
haunted by death;
not knowing the cause, they could only blame the house
they had lived in.
Some could be seen to be roaming the streets in a dazed
condition,
so long as their strength held up; if not, they'd be lying in
tears
flat out on the ground, quite still but for rolling their
sleepless eyes;
then, weakly extending their arms to the stars in the
lowering heavens,
here or there, wherever death took them, they gave up the
ghost.
'How do you think I felt? What *ought* to have been my
feelings
but loathing for life and a longing to join my people in death?
Whichever direction I turned my gaze, my eyes were
confronted
by corpses, scattered like rotten apples fallen from shaken
branches, or else like acorns under a wind-tossed oak tree.
Look at that temple over there with its towering columns
and lines of steps. That's Jupiter's temple. But who did not
offer
incense upon those altars in vain? How often the
worshippers
saying their prayers, whether husbands for wives or fathers
for children,
ended their lives in front of the shrine with their prayers
unanswered
and some of the incense still unused, found clutched in their
hands!
How often a bull was brought to the temple and, while the
priest
was solemnly praying and pouring the wine libation
between
its horns, it slumped to the ground, unfelled by the axe it
awaited!

When I was sacrificing to Jove for myself, my country
and three sons, all of a sudden the victim moaned with a fearful
bellow and then collapsed of its own accord; when its throat
was cut, the knife was merely stained with a feeble trickle.
Entrails too were diseased and had lost the signs of the truth
or divine admonition; the frightful plague had infected the vitals.
I saw that corpses were strewn at the foot of the temple portals;
people had hanged themselves outside in front of the altars,
to make their death more offensive. They'd banished the fear of death
by inflicting death and inviting the fate which they knew was in store.
Dead bodies no longer received the customary funeral rites;
there wasn't room at the gates to take so many processions.
Corpses were either exposed on the ground unburied or heaped
on pyres without any honours; respect for the dead was forgotten.
The living fought over the pyres, and bodies were burning in flames
intended for others. With no one left to weep for their loved ones,
the souls of the old and the young, the spirits of husbands and children,
restlessly wandered in limbo, unsped by the rituals of mourning.
No space was left for a tomb, no wood to allow a cremation.'

THE BIRTH OF THE MYRMIDONS

Aeacus next explained how sorrow had yielded to gladness:
'Overwhelmed by this powerful whirlwind of pain, I protested:
"Jupiter, hear me! Lord! If the story isn't a lie,
that you lay long ago in the arms of Asópus' daughter, Aegina,
if you, great father, are not ashamed to acknowledge your son,
then either restore me my people or send me too to my grave!"
The god gave a sign with a lightning flash and a peal of thunder.
"I welcome your omen!" I duly exclaimed, "and pray it betokens
your kind goodwill. I take your response as a pledge of your favour."
Nearby there happened to stand a magnificent spreading oak tree,
sacred to Jove and sprung from the seed of an oak in Dodóna.
Here we saw a long column of ants which were gathering grain,
all bearing their heavy loads in their tiny mouths and steadily
trudging along their familiar path on the wrinkled tree bark.
"How many there are!" I reflected in wonder and cried, "O Father,
of gods the most excellent, grant me as many subjects as these
to replenish my empty walls!" Then a noisy trembling came over
the oak, though there wasn't a breath of wind to disturb the branches.

My own limbs shuddered in quaking terror, my hair stood on end;
yet I kissed the earth and the tree, not confessing my hopes to myself,
though I dearly hoped and cherished my wish deep down in my heart.
Night followed, when bodies worn out with care are taken over
by sleep, and I dreamed a dream: before me was standing
the same oak,
with all of its many branches and all those thousands of creatures
crawling along them. I heard the noisy trembling again,
as the column of grain collectors was shaken down to the earth.
The ants then suddenly grew, appearing larger and larger,
until they rose from the ground and stood with bodies erect.
Their thinness was gone, they had only two feet, and their colour no longer
was black; their limbs were completely changed into human form.
Then I woke from my sleep; now conscious again, I cursed my dream
and complained that the gods were no help. But a deafening hubbub was echoing
round the house, and I thought I could hear the unfamiliar
sound of a human crowd. "This must be part of my dream,"
I supposed; when Telamon opened the doors of my chamber and burst in,
crying, "Father, come out, for a sight you would never have hoped for,
never believed!" I followed him out, and there were the men

who'd appeared to me in my dream, exactly the same as I'd seen them
down to their order of march, approaching to hail me as king.
So offering thanks to Jove for my new-found subjects, I gave them
homes in the city and fields to be ploughed where their previous owners
had left them vacant; I called them Mýrmidons after the ants*
they had come from. You've seen the bodies they now inhabit;
they also preserve their original nature – a thrifty, industrious
people, who cling to their gains and store them away for the future.
All of them young and brave, they'll follow you into the field,
as soon as the wind from the east which happily brought you here' –
he was right, it *was* the east wind* – 'is replaced by one from the south.'

CEPHALUS AND PROCRIS

Aeacus filled the length of the day in talking of these
and other affairs with the envoy from Athens. The evening was given
to feasting, the night to sleep. The following morning at sunrise
the wind was again in the east and staying the ships from their homeward
voyage. So Clytus and Butes collected their older companion,
Cephalus; then the three of them made their way to the palace
to find the king. But the king was in bed and not yet awake.

They were met at the entrance by Phocus, one of the royal princes;
his brothers, Peleus and Telamon, were choosing men for the army.
Phocus led the Athenian guests to the inner courtyard,
thence to a beautiful room, where they all sat down together.
While they were talking, he noticed Cephalus holding a spear
with a golden point and made of an unfamiliar wood;
so he interrupted the conversation to question the hero.
'I love the forests,' he told him, 'and have a passion for hunting.
I keep on wondering where the shaft of the spear you are carrying
started its life. What wood was it cut from? It cannot be ash,
as it isn't a pale gold colour; and if it were cornel, it surely
would have to be knotted. I've no idea where your javelin came from,
but have to confess that I've never set eyes on a lovelier weapon.'
Clytus or Butes answered, 'You may be surprised by its beauty;
but when you have learned how it's used, your surprise will be even greater.
This spear never misses its target, its flight isn't subject to luck,
and it comes back, covered with blood, with no one there to return it.'
This made young Phocus extremely eager to know the full story:
why the spear had been given to Cephalus, where it had come from,
and who had presented this wonderful gift. Then Cephalus answered

the questions he put, though shame forbade him to mention the price
he had paid.* In tears of grief for the wife he had lost, he began:
'Prince Phocus, son of a goddess;* it's hard to believe, but this javelin
is causing these tears of mine and long will continue to cause them,
if heaven decrees that I live much longer. This weapon destroyed
my wife and destroyed me too. How I wish I had never possessed it!
'You've probably heard of Orithýia, whom Bóreas loved
and abducted. Procris, my wife, was Orithyia's sister.
If you wished to compare the two for their beauty and disposition,
she was the one to abduct! Our love, no less than her father
Eréchtheus brought us together. They called me happy, and rightly.
But heaven was jealous, or else I might be as happy today.
A month had passed since our wedding-day, and I was spreading
my nets for the antlered deer, when over the top of Hyméttus,
the mountain always in flower, Auróra, the goddess of dawn,
caught sight of me there in the saffron light of the morning and forced me
away to the sky. Let me tell you the simple truth, without
offence to the goddess. For all the charm of her blushing face,
although she controls the frontiers of night and day, although
she quaffs her juices of nectar, Procris remained my adored one,
Procris was there in my heart and the name of Procris was always
upon my lips. I constantly spoke of our wedding rites,

of the joys of love when a man and his bride are first
united,
our marriage so new and fresh, and now already
forsaken.
The goddess got angry and cried, "Stop moaning,
ungrateful man!
You can keep your Procris. But I can foresee the future:
you'll wish
you had never possessed her!" With that she
indignantly sent me packing.
Journeying home, I pondered over Aurora's words
and started to doubt: had my wife been faithful during
my absence?
Her youth and her beauty suggested she might quite
well have betrayed me;
her character told me she must be true. But
nevertheless,
I had been away for some time, Aurora herself was
scarcely
a model of chaste behaviour, and anything frightens a
lover.
I therefore decided to look for a grievance and use
inducements
to shake my Procris' loyalty and virtue. Aurora
encouraged
my doubts and altered my features – I seemed to feel I
was changing.
'And so I returned to the city of Athens without
being recognized.
Passing into my house, I found not a trace of scandal
or misbehaviour, only concern for the kidnapped
master.
A thousand ruses could scarcely gain me access to
Procris;
and seeing her stunned me again – I almost abandoned
my plan
to test her fidelity, barely restraining myself from
confessing

the truth or kissing her on the lips as would have been
proper.
Sadness sat on her brow, though sadness became no
woman
better than her. She was pining in grief for the loss of her
stolen
husband. Oh Phocus, imagine what glorious beauty she
had,
when beauty shone out of her even in grief! I need not tell
you
how often her modest nature repulsed my attempts to
seduce her,
how often she said, "I am saving myself for one alone;
wherever he is, my joys are reserved entirely for him."
What sane man wouldn't have felt that he'd tested his wife's
fidelity
far enough? But I couldn't be satisfied, only determined
to wound myself. In return for a night, I promised a
fortune;
and then by more and more gifts I at last broke down her
resistance.
In wicked triumph I cried, "It is I, disguised as a lover,
but truly your husband! I've caught you myself, you
treacherous harlot!"
She said not a word. Just overcome by her unvoiced shame,
she fled from her evil husband and left that house of
entrapment.
'Resentment against me made her detest all men, and
she wandered
over the mountains, engaged in the chaste pursuits of
Diana.
I was alone and the flames of my love burned even more
fiercely
inside my heart. I implored her forgiveness, confessed I had
wronged her,
and said that I too could well have succumbed to a like
temptation,
if I had ever been offered such hugely extravagant gifts.

When I'd made this confession, she felt she had punished
the slight to her honour;
I won her back, and we passed the years in peace and
delight.
As though the gift of herself were too little, she made me
a further
present, a dog she'd received from her patron goddess
Diana,
who'd spoken these words, "No dog will ever run faster
than this one."
My dear wife also gave me the javelin you see in my
hands.
Would you like me to tell you about the fate of my
earlier present?
Listen; the story's a strange one, you'll find it very
surprising.

'Oédipus, son of Láïus, had solved the riddle* which
baffled
the brains of others before him. The Sphinx was
defeated and lying
toppled beneath the cliff, her own dark secrets
forgotten.
At once a second monster, a giant vixen, was sent
to ravage Boeótian Thebes; and many countryfolk
feared
for their lives and the lives of their flocks and herds.
The men in the district
joined me in forming a cordon extending all round the
plain,
but the great fox swiftly surmounted our nets with the
lightest of leaps,
bounding over the line at the top of the trap we had
laid.
Our hounds were at once unleashed; but the vixen
evaded pursuit
and cheated the pack by running as fast as a bird can
fly.

Then all the hunters loudly appealed to me for my Whirlwind
(that was the name of my dog); he had long been struggling like fury
to slip his own leash and straining against his constricting collar.
The hound was released, and at once we had no idea where he was;
his footprints showed in the baking sand, but Whirlwind himself
had vanished, gone with the speed of a spear or of bullets hurled
from a whirling sling or an arrow shot from a Cretan bow.
I climbed to the peak of a hill overlooking the country all round,
and so obtained an excellent view of a new kind of chase,
in which the vixen one moment appeared to be caught, but the next
to escape from the hound's very jaws. The crafty creature refused
to run in a line straight ahead, but eluded the fangs at her tail
by circling around and denying her foe the use of his spring.
But the dog kept close on his quarry's heels; and yes, he had got her!
But no, he had not; he was only snapping at empty air.
I turned to my javelin for help, and while I was poising it over
my shoulder and trying to slip my fingers inside the thong,
I looked away for a moment and then looked back to the same place.
There, in the midst of the plain, I saw with surprise two figures
in marble; you'd guess that one was in flight, while the other was barking.
I suppose, if a god was there with the runners, he must have decided

that neither should win that astonishing race and neither
be beaten.'

Here Cephalus paused and was silent. Then Phocus said,
'Now for your javelin,
what was the crime it committed?' and Cephalus told
him the story:
'In my case, Phocus, joy was the first beginning of
sorrow.
I'll tell you at once of my joy. Oh Phocus, I love to
remember
that blessed time, those early years of our married life,
when I was so happy with Procris and she was happy
with me!
We were truly together; we loved and looked after each
other so fondly.
In her eyes Jove could never have made such a
wonderful lover,
and I could not have been drawn to a woman other
than Procris,
not Venus herself. Our hearts were on fire with the
passion we shared.
When the sun god's earliest rays were striking the
mountain peaks,
I'd venture outdoors to hunt in the woods, as a young
man will.
No attendants, horses or keen-nosed hounds would be
keeping me company;
I never bothered with knotted nets, but relied on my
spear.
When my arm was weary with slaughtering beasts, I'd
return to the cool shade,
wooing the breeze which rose from the chillier valleys
below.
The gentle breeze in the noonday heat was all that I
wanted,
all I was waiting for, all that I needed to ease my
tiredness.

"Come to me, beautiful breeze, steal into my breast, you're so lovely. This heat
is burning me up. Relieve me I beg you, as only you can!"
My fate was leading me on, and I might perhaps have continued
with further endearments. Perhaps I would say, "You give me such pleasure!
oh breeze, your refreshing caresses! It's for you that I worship the forest
and lonely places. Yours is the breath that I'm always longing
to catch in my lips." Some eavesdropper heard these equivocal words
and misunderstood what they meant. The breeze that I called to so often
he thought was the name of a nymph with whom I must be in love.
At once, without thinking, he went to my wife to report this imagined
affair and repeat in a whisper the words he had overheard.
Love is a credulous thing. As I learned later on, poor Procris
collapsed and fell to the ground in shock. When at last she revived,
she declared how wretched she was, how cruelly fate had treated her,
I had been so unfaithful. The charge against me was groundless,
her fears were inspired by nothing, only the ghost of a name;
but she suffered, poor woman, as though I were keeping a genuine mistress.
Yet often she felt uncertain and desperately hoped she'd be proved
mistaken. It couldn't be true, she said; unless she caught me
red-handed, she never would find her husband guilty of falsehood.

'The following morning, when saffron Aurora had banished the night,
I left for the forest as usual and, after a fruitful hunt,
stretched out on the grass. "Now come to me, breeze," I chanted,
"Soothe me and cure my weariness!" Suddenly, while I was speaking,
I thought that I heard a moan. "Come, beautiful breeze!" I continued.
Another disturbance, this time the rustle of fallen leaves.
A beast on the prowl, I decided, and sent my javelin flying.
Procris was there under cover and, clutching her wounded breast,
cried out in her pain. When I recognized the voice of my faithful
wife, my own wife, I rushed like a madman towards the sound.
I found her dying, her clothes all stained and spattered with blood;
she was trying to draw from her wound, alas, her own dear present
to me. I tenderly lifted her body towards me, the body
dearer to me than my own; then tearing her dress from her bosom,
I bound her wound and attempted to staunch the flow of her blood,
while I begged her not to desert me, defiled by the guilt of her death.
Though her strength was failing, she forced herself to murmur this much
with her dying breath: "I implore you now, by the vows of our marriage,
by all the gods of the sky and the gods where soon I shall be,
by any kindness I've shown you and by our love which continues

even now when I'm dying, although it has caused my death,
please never allow your Breeze to take my place as your wife."
As she spoke, I at last understood that a name had caused this confusion,
and told her the truth. But what was the use of her learning the truth?
She sank in my arms and her last faint strength ebbed out with her blood;
and while she was able to see, her eyes were on mine, and mine
were the lips which caught her breath as the poor soul breathed her last.
But the look on her face was enough to show me she'd died in peace.'

The hero ended. His audience, like him, was in tears. Then Aeacus
came on the scene with a pair of his sons* and a party of fresh-raised
soldiers. Cephalus quickly took charge of the armed contingent.

BOOK 8

Structurally, this book contains a long epic centre-piece, *Meleäger and the Calydonian Boar*, framed on either side by what may be seen as two pairs of complementary stories. More important, however, is the variety of tone and originality of treatment which is to be found in the ingeniously knitted narrative. In two of the episodes, dramatic rhetoric is a crucial element.

Scylla and Minos (1–151) shows a daughter betraying her father for love and suffering rejection from the object of her passion. The heart of this section is Scylla's formal speeches, expressing first her personal conflict and later her fury in rejection. Ovid cleverly leaves us asking how far his heroine deserves the short shrift she receives from Minos. The much shorter and slighter companion piece, *The Minotaur and Ariadne* (152–82), also involves a daughter in a parallel situation; but the interest here lies in the labyrinth created by Daedalus, who provides the link with the next pair of stories.

More tenderness and compelling detail may be found in *Daedalus and Icarus* (183–235). There is a tragic poignancy in the boy Icarus' fall after refusing to fly as his father has told him to – we must be reminded of Phaëthon in Book 2. The complementary *Daedalus and Perdix* (236–59) is once again much slighter, but here there is a situational contrast: Daedalus tries to make Perdix fall, while metamorphosis allows his pupil to fly.

The story of *Meleäger and the Calydonian Boar* (260–546) was a very old favourite; it went back as far as Homer and was the subject of (lost) plays by Sophocles and Euripides. The first section, which concerns the boar-hunt itself (260–444), starts

out in the grand epic manner with a brilliant description of the boar and the usual catalogue of participant heroes. But then Ovid's subversive originality takes over: famous figures, such as Theseus, Jason and the young Nestor, acquit themselves with conspicuous lack of distinction; and Meleäger's own success in killing the boar is immediately marred by his killing both of his uncles. The following section (445–525) is in contrasting tragic mode and we may be inclined to take it more seriously. Althaea's dramatic soliloquy, as the queen agonizes between her loyalty to her dead brothers and her living son, is in typical Euripidean vein, and we may empathize better with her than we did with Scylla. Even so, the climax of Meleäger's painful death and his mother's suicide is undermined in the final section (526–46) by the comic exaggeration of his sisters' grief, leading on to their metamorphosis to guinea-fowl.

Acheloüs, the Naiads and Perimele (547–610) is a relaxing interlude. An attractive scene in the river-god's grotto is followed by his account of the metamorphosis of five naiads, who had slighted him, into a group of islands. This contrasts with the transformation of Perimele, the nymph he had loved and rescued from drowning, into a separate island on her own.

The final pair of stories offers a contrast on a much larger scale. In both tales Ovid is almost certainly indebted to the Greek poet Callimachus (third century BC), the arch-exponent of the mini-epic. *Philemon and Baucis* (611–724) centres on the piety and reward of two needy old people who unwittingly offer hospitality to two gods in their humble home. The homely detail makes this, perhaps, the most charming piece in the whole poem, and the final metamorphosis is genuinely touching. The complementary story of *Erysichthon* (725–884), which portrays impiety and its awful punishment, is a great deal less pleasant. The detail is much more sinister and exaggerated, with the description of Hunger (personified like Envy in 2.760–832) as a superlative high-spot. The nastiness of Erysichthon's growing obsession with food is only mitigated towards the end, when the focus shifts more humorously to his daughter Mestra eluding pursuit from her slave-master on the seashore through repeated metamorphosis.

SCYLLA AND MINOS

The morning star was dispersing the night and drawing the curtain
for shining day, when the east wind fell and the clouds of moisture
lifted. A southerly breeze provided a smooth home passage
for Céphalus with the troops from Aegína, and after an easy
voyage they entered harbour sooner than they had expected.
Meanwhile King Minos was laying waste to the coast of Mégara
and trying out his military strength on the city where Nisus
reigned, Alcáthoë. Nisus' dignified head with its snow-white
hair was marked on the crown by a magic lock of resplendent
crimson, and on this lock the power of his kingdom depended.
Five moons had waned and a sixth was newly displaying her horns.
The fortunes of war still hung in the scales, as the bird of victory
soared and wavered between the kings but never descended.
A tower rose up on the echoing walls of the royal palace,
the walls where Apollo, Latóna's son, is said to have rested
his golden lyre, whose music lingered on in the masonry.
Scylla, the daughter of Nisus, would frequently make her way up,

to play on the musical wall by throwing the smallest of pebbles –
that was in peacetime. When war broke out, she would still quite often
ascend the tower to watch the battling hosts in contention.
As war dragged on, she had come to know the names of the chieftains,
their Cretan arms, their horses, their dress and magnificent quivers.
She had specially come to know the face of the leader, Európa's
offspring – more indeed than was proper. When Minos covered
his head in a casque bedecked with a crest of plumage, she thought,
'How handsome that helmeted warrior looks!' And now he was wielding
his gleaming bronze-plated shield. How well it became him to wield it!
Tensing his muscles, he launched his spear in a graceful curve;
such strength and such skill together excited the young girl's praise.
He had levelled his arrow and now was bending his pliant bow;
she swore that it might be Apollo there, standing to shoot his arrows.
At last he had lifted his visor to bare his face; in his glorious
purple cloak, he was mounted astride his milk-white, brightly
caparisoned steed and curbing his charger's foaming mouth.
Beside herself with excitement, the daughter of Nisus was almost
out of her mind. 'How happy the spear which *he* is grasping!'
she said to herself. 'How happy the reins that his hands are gripping!'

Girl though she was, she felt a strong impulse to find her way
through the enemy lines, if only she might; she was filled with the urge
to leap from the top of the tower right down to the Cretan encampment,
or open the great bronze gates of the city to welcome the foe
or to do what else King Minos might wish. And while she sat there,
raptly watching the sunlit tents of the lord of Cnossos,
'This heart-breaking war!' she said. 'Should it fill me with grief or with joy?
I cannot be sure. I adore King Minos and he is my foe;
for that I must grieve. But without the war I should never have known him.
Perhaps we could put an end to the war, if he took me hostage,
as I should be there beside him; my presence could vouch for the peace.
Peerlessly beautiful prince, if your mother Europa was half
as lovely as you are, Jupiter's passion was richly deserved!
Oh for the wings of a bird which could waft me down through the air
and ground me in Minos' camp! How utterly blessed I should be!
I should make myself known and confess my love and ask him what dowry
would buy him for me – so long as it wasn't my father's fortress.
Indeed I would rather forswear the bed of my dreams than achieve
my desire by treason. Yet often a lenient conqueror's mercy
has turned a defeat from shameful loss to glorious gain.

The war he is fighting, at least, is just – to avenge the son
who was murdered.* His cause is strong and so are the
arms that support it.
Defeat awaits us, no doubt. If the city is destined to fall,
then why should it be for his gallant warriors and not
my love
to open the gates of my own walls up to him? Better the
victory
won without carnage, tedious delay and expense of his
own blood.
At least I should have no need to fear some soldier in
ignorance
piercing your manly breast, dear Minos. (Who could
be so
hard-hearted, to aim his merciless javelin against you
on purpose?)
'Excellent plan! I am fully resolved to surrender
myself
with my country as dowry and bring the war to a
speedy conclusion.
If wishes were horses, though, beggars would ride.*
There are sentries on guard
and the keys of the gates are held by my father. He is
my only
reason, alas, for fear, the only bar to my hopes.
I would to God that I had no father! Yet God helps
those
who help themselves, remember, and fortune favours
the brave.
Another woman whose passion was blazing as strongly
as mine
would now be already destroying whatever opposed her
love –
and delight in destroying it. Why should another be
braver than I?
I'd venture to go through fire and sword. Yet fire and
sword

are not what I need. What I need is my father's magical lock.
That crimson lock is far more precious than much fine gold.
With the lock I am happy and mistress of all the joy that I pray for!'
While Scylla was speaking, Nature's most potent feeder of heartache,
night, came on, and our heroine's boldness increased with the darkness.
During that first quiet time when hearts that are weary with cares
of the day are enshrouded in sleep, she silently entered Nisus'
bedroom and cut the fateful lock from his head – that a daughter
should do such a thing to her father! Clutching her impious prize,
she made her way through the midst of the foe, self-righteously confident,
into the royal presence and spoke to the horrified Minos:
'Driven to crime by love, I, Princess Scylla, the daughter
of Nisus, surrender to you the gods of my country and household.
I ask no reward but yourself. As the pledge of my passion, receive
this crimson lock. This is no mere ringlet of hair, believe me.
My father's life is now in your power!' With hand outstretched
she tendered her damnable gift. King Minos recoiled from her offer
and, deeply troubled to witness an act so unparalleled, answered,
'You blot on our age! I pray that the gods will banish you far

from their own bright sphere and that space is denied you on
land and ocean.
Certainly *I* shall never allow my own sphere, Crete,
the cradle of Jove, to be made unclean by so evil a
monster!'
He spoke, and after he'd settled affairs with his captured
foes
as a just lawgiver, he ordered his crews to untie the hawsers
loose from their moorings and row their bronze-prowed
warships to sea.
When Scylla saw that the keels were launched and afloat on
the water
and Minos had given her no reward for her wicked
surrender,
now that her prayers were exhausted, she shifted to violent
anger.
With streaming hair and her arms outstretched, she shouted
in fury:
'Where are you fleeing, you traitor, who owe your successes
to *me*?
I put you before my country, I put you before my father.
Where are you fleeing, pitiless man, whose victory is due
to my kindness no less than my crime? Can you not be
moved by the present
I brought you, moved by my love or moved by the hopes
that I built
so wholly on you? You've abandoned me, Minos! Where
can I turn?
To my native land? But it lies defeated. Suppose it were
standing:
my own betrayal has barred it to me. Turn to my father,
the man I presented to you? My countrymen rightly
detest me,
the neighbouring peoples fear my example. I banished
myself
from the rest of the world, that Crete alone should be open
to me.
If you exclude me also from Crete and abandon me here,

you ungrateful man, it was not Europa who gave you life
but an African quicksand, Armenian tigress or swirling
Charýbdis.*
Jupiter wasn't your father. He didn't seduce your
mother
disguised as a bull. That story's a lie. A genuine bull
was your true begetter. Take your revenge now, Nisus,
my father!
Rejoice in my misery, walls of my city that I have so
lately
betrayed! I confess that I brought it upon myself and
deserve
to die; but still I could wish my destruction to come
from someone
I hurt by my treachery. Why should *you* punish me,
Minos, seeing
you triumphed because of my guilt? Let my crime
against father and country
be thought of as service to you! She truly deserved to
have you
as mate, your adulterous queen* who cheated the
fierce-eyed bull
with a cow of wood and the fruit of her womb was a
hybrid monster.
Do you hear what I'm saying? Or are the winds that
follow your navy
sweeping away my words, you ungrateful creature, to
nothing?
Now no wonder at all that Pasíphaë worshipped her
bull-mate
more than she worshipped you, as you were the
beastlier creature.
Heavens! He's telling his men to row faster. I hear the
splash
of their dipping oars. The shore and I are receding
together.
Your haste is in vain! You shan't be allowed to forget
what you owe me.

Like it or not, I'll follow you, holding tight to your curving
stern, to be dragged through the length of the sea!' She had hardly spoken,
when into the waves she leapt and, strong in the strength of her passion,
she clung, an unwelcome appendage, behind the Cnossian warship.
There she was spotted by Nisus (her father had lately been changed
to a falcon with tawny wings and was hovering now in the air).
He swooped as she clung to the vessel, to tear at his child with his hooked beak.
Scylla in terror let go of the stern and, as she was falling,
a light breeze seemed to sustain her and save her from touching the water.
Feathers grew over her arms. Transformed to the shape of a bird,
she is known as Ciris the Shearer,* and takes this name from the shorn lock.

THE MINOTAUR AND ARIADNE

When Minos had disembarked and stood once again on Cretan
soil, he offered the sacrifice, promised to Jove, of a hundred
bulls and adorned the walls of his palace with trophies of victory.
The family's guilty secret had grown; Pasiphaë's bestial
adultery* now was exposed in her monstrous offspring, the Mínotaur.
Minos determined to hide this disgrace to his marriage-bed
inside the twistings and turns of a dark, inextricable maze.
The labyrinth then was built by an eminent master-craftsman,
Daédalus, who had obscured all guiding marks and designed it

to cheat the eye with bewildering patterns of tortuous alleys.
Just as the Phrygian river Maeánder sports and plays
in his running stream with the ebb and flow of his teasing course –
as he bends right back on himself, he can see his water advancing,
and keeps his wavering currents in motion, back to their headspring
or out to the open sea – so Daedalus' warren of passages
wandered this way and that. In such a treacherous maze
its very designer could scarcely retrace his steps to the entrance.
Here Minos confined his monster son, half man, half bull,
and fed him twice on the blood of Athenian youths and maidens,
chosen by lot as tribute exacted* at nine-year intervals.
But the third repast destroyed the Minotaur. One of the youths,
Prince Théseus,* was aided by fair Ariádne, the daughter of Minos.
Rewinding the thread that she gave him, he found the elusive entrance
which none had regained before him. He carried the princess off
and sailed to Naxos, but there on the shore he cruelly abandoned
his loving companion. She wept and wailed in her lonely plight,
till Bacchus swept her up in his arms and came to her rescue.
'My star,' he declared, 'you must shine for ever!' Removing the crown
from her forehead, he launched it skyward. It whirled and spun through the air,

and during its flight the gems were changed into brilliant
fires,
coming to rest once more in the shape of a jewelled circlet*
between the Kneeler and bright Ophiúcus, who holds the
Snake.*

DAEDALUS AND ICARUS

Daedalus now had come to detest his protracted exile*
in Crete and was longing to visit his native country again,
but his way was barred by the sea. 'King Minos can block
my escape,
by land or water,' he sighed. 'The air, at least, is still open;
my path lies there. He is lord of the world, but not lord of
the sky.'
So saying, he put his mind to techniques unexplored before
and altered the laws of nature. He carefully layered some
feathers,
the smallest to start with, the shorter positioned next to the
longer –
you'd think they had *grown* like that – as sometimes rustic
panpipes
rise in a gradual slope with their reeds of unequal length;
and then he bound them with twine in the middle and wax
at the bottom.
This neatly compacted plumage he curved in a gentle
camber
to imitate real birds' wings. His young son Icarus, standing
beside him and little aware of the threat to himself he was
touching,
smiled as he caught at the feathers fluttering in the breeze;
and now and again he would carelessly soften the yellow
wax
with his thumb, enjoying his game as he meddled and
interfered
with his father's wonderful work. But soon the finishing
touches

were deftly laid, and Daedalus balanced his aged body
on both of his wings, then beat at the air and hovered
suspended.
Next he instructed his son: 'Now, Icarus, listen carefully!
Keep to the middle way. If you fly too low, the water
will clog your wings; if you fly too high, they'll be
scorched by fire.
Fly between sea and sun. No need to determine your
course
by Boötes, the Bear, or Oríon's naked sword, like a
sailor.
Simply follow my lead.' As he gave his pupil his flying
orders, he fitted the wings on the boy's inexperienced
shoulders;
and while he did it the old man's cheeks were wet with
his tears
and his hands were trembling in fatherly fear. Then
kissing the lips
of his darling son for the very last time, he rose on his
wings
and flew in front, as afraid for the lad as a bird
escorting
her fledgeling out of her mountain nest to float on the
breezes.
'Follow!' he cried, as he taught him the skills that
would prove his downfall.
Moving his own two wings, he kept looking back at
his son's.
They were spied by a fisherman dangling his catch on
his quivering rod,
a shepherd at rest on his crook and a ploughman*
steering his ploughshare.
All watched in amazement, thinking, 'They certainly
must be gods
to fly through the air!' Now Juno's island, Samos, was
coming
up on the left (Delos and Paros were far behind them);

Lebínthos lay to the right with the honey-rich island,
Calýmne –
when all this adventurous flying went to Icarus' head.
He ceased to follow his leader; he'd fallen in love with
the sky,
and soared up higher and higher. The scorching rays of
the sun
grew closer and softened the fragrant wax which fastened
his plumage.
The wax dissolved; and as Icarus flapped his naked arms,
deprived of the wings which had caught the air that was
buoying them upwards,
'Father!' he shouted, again and again. But the boy and his
shouting
were drowned in the blue-green main which is called the
Icárian Sea.
His unhappy father, no longer a father, called out, 'Icarus!
Where are you, Icarus? Where on earth shall I find you?
Icarus!'
he kept crying. And then he caught sight of the wings in the
water.
Daedalus cursed the skill of his hands and buried his dear
son's
corpse in a grave. The land where he lies is known as
Icária.

DAEDALUS AND PERDIX

As Daedalus laid his poor son's body to rest in an earth-
mound,
out of a muddy field-drain peeped a chattering partridge,
who loudly clapped with its wings and uttered a cry of
triumph.
New at the time to the feathered kingdom, unseen before,
it had lately been changed to a bird and was Daedalus'
standing reproach.

The craftsman's sister, unhappily blind to the future, had trusted
her precious son to him as a pupil. The child was a boy
of high intelligence, twelve years old, and responsive to teaching.
He'd even observed the pattern of bones on the spine of a fish
and taken that as a model, cutting a series of teeth
in a strip of metal and so devising the common handsaw.
He had also invented the compasses, joining two pieces of iron
on a single hinge; if the legs remained at a constant distance,
one point could be fixed, while the other described a perfect circle.
Daedalus, though, was jealous, and threw him headlong down
from the sacred hill of Minerva,* pretending he'd slipped; but Pallas,
the goddess who fosters artistic talent, caught him and turned him,
still in mid-air, to a bird and covered his body in feathers.
Nevertheless, the strength of his quick intelligence filtered
into his wings and his feet, and he stayed with his old name – Perdix.
The bird, however, can't lift its body far from the earth
or build its nest in the branches of trees or on mountainous crags.
It flutters close to the ground and lays its eggs in the hedgerows,
never forgetting that fall long ago and frightened of heights.

MELEÄGER AND THE CALYDONIAN BOAR

Daedalus now was exhausted and found a home in Sicily;
Cócalus welcomed the suppliant kindly and armed to defend him.
Back to the story of Theseus. Thanks to the glorious hero,
Athens had ceased to pay King Minos her dismal tribute.
Her temples were wreathed with flowers; and the citizens called on Minerva,
goddess of war, on Jove and the other gods, whom they duly
worshipped with animal sacrifice, gifts and caskets of incense.
Wandering rumour had published the name of Theseus throughout
the cities of Argos, and his was the help that the peoples of wealthy
Greece entreated whenever they fell into serious danger.
His was the help that Cálydon humbly and anxiously begged for,
although she had Meleäger. The reason for her request
was the boar that served and championed the wrath of Diana.
King Oéneus,* the story goes, gave thanks for a year of plenty
by yielding the grain's first-fruits to Ceres, and pouring libations
of oil to fair-haired Minerva and wine to its deity, Bacchus.
After the rural powers, the gods of the sky were given
the honour they all desired. Diana alone was forgotten;
her altars, they say, were neglected and languished without any incense.
The gods can feel anger too. 'This slight shall not go unpunished,'

she cried. To gain her vengeance, the injured goddess dispatched
a boar through the fields of Aetólia, huge as the bulls that graze on
grassy Epírus and even more huge than the bulls of Sicily.
Blood and fire were aglow in his eyes; his neck was stiff
with bristles as firm as serried spears or the stakes on a rampart.
His massive flanks were flecked with a spray of seething foam
from his grunting snorts; his tusks were as long as an Indian elephant's.
Lightning flashed from his mouth and his breath-blasts shrivelled the grassland.
He'd either trample the young corn down while still in the blade,
or reap the crop which the farmer had prayed for and soon would mourn,
by destroying the full-grown grain in the ear; so the promised harvests
never arrived at the threshing-floor or the waiting granary.
Bunches of grapes were strewn on the ground with their trailing vine-shoots;
so were the berries and branches that fell from the evergreen olives.
The flocks had also to suffer his fury: dogs and shepherds
failed to protect them, nor could the fierce bulls guard the cattle.
The country folk fled from their farms and only felt they were safe
behind the walls of their towns – until Meleäger assembled
his band of fighters, inspired like him with the longing for glory.

Such were Castor and Pollux, the twins whom Leda the wife
of Týndareus mothered, the one an outstanding boxer, the other
a brilliant rider; Jason who built the first ship, *Argo*;
Theseus along with his bosom friend, Piríthoüs; Théstius'
sons, Plexíppus and Tóxeus;* Lýnceus and fleet-footed Idas,
the sons of Áphareus; Caéneus, now no longer a woman;
fierce Leucíppus; Acástus, a splendid javelin-thrower;
Hippóthoüs, Dryas and Phoenix the son of Amýntor; Actor's
two sons, Eúrytus and Ctéatus; Phýleus, who hailed from Elis;
Télamon too and Péleus, the father of mighty Achílles;
Admétus, the son of Pheres; Boeótian Ioláüs;
tireless Eurýtion joined by Echíon, invincible runner;
Lelex from Lócrian Nárycum; Pánopeus, Hýleus and bloodthirsty
Híppasus; Nestor of Pylos, still in the prime of his life;
and Spartan Hippócoön's sons, whom he sent from ancient Amýclae;
Ulýsses' father, Laértes; Ancaéus born in Arcadia;
Mopsus the prophet and Amphiaráüs,* not yet betrayed
by his wife; Atalánta, the pride of the forests on Mount Lycaéus,
whose robe was clasped at the neck by a buckle of polished metal,
her hair very simply gathered up in a single knot.
Rattling on her left shoulder, there hung the ivory quiver
that guarded her arrows, above the bow that she held in her left hand.
So much for her garb; and as for her face, you could truthfully call it
a girlish face for a boy or a boyish face for a girl.
The moment he saw Atalanta, the young Calydónian hero
longed to possess her, though heaven opposed it. The flames of his passion

stole through his heart, and he cried, 'How happy the man *that* maiden
chooses to wed!' The occasion and natural shyness forbade him
to speak any further. The mighty contest ahead was more pressing.
The scene is a dense primeval forest, untouched by the axe;
it starts on a level plateau and looks out over the sloping
country below. When the hunters arrived, some spread their nets,
another group slipped their hounds from the leash, while others followed
the well-marked spoor, all keen to unearth their dangerous quarry.
Then picture a valley basin, where streams of rainwater trickle
down from the hills to a marshy dell, well filled at the bottom
with pliant osiers, light sedge-grass and dense swamp-rushes,
withies and tall bulrushes with short reeds growing below.
It was here that the boar was roused from his covert and violently hurled himself
straight at his foes, like lightning struck from the clashing clouds.
The trees were flattened beneath his onslaught, the trunks crashed down
as he butted against them. Loudly hallooing, the heroes bravely
brandished their glittering broad-tipped spears in front of their bodies.
The boar charged forward, scattering the various hounds which obstructed
his fury, dispersing the baying pack with his thrusts at their flanks.

The first long spear to be thrown was launched from
Echion's shoulder,
but all to no purpose; it merely grazed the trunk of a maple.
The next one flew from the sturdy hand of Thessalian
Jason.
This looked as if it would firmly lodge in the back of its
target,
but too much force was behind the throw and it overshot.
Then Mopsus cried to Apollo: 'Hear me, Phoebus! I honour
you
now as I ever did. So guide my spear where I aim it!'
The god complied as far as he could. The boar was struck,
but without being wounded. Diana lifted the tip of the
javelin
off in its flight; the weapon arrived, but the point had gone
missing.
The wild beast's anger was stirred and blazed like terrible
lightning.
Fire flashed forth from his eyes and the breath of his nostrils
was flame.
As a massive rock that is forcefully flung from the sling of a
catapult
flies through the air to demolish a wall or a tower full of
soldiers,
so were the blows of the hog, whose charge on the
huntsmen was no less
deadly. He flattened Hippálmus and Pélagon, there on the
right
to protect the wing. Immediately others moved forward to
rescue
their fallen friends. But Hippocoön's son, Enaésimus, failed
to escape those death-dealing tusks. As he started to run in
a panic,
the animal slashed at his knee and the strength of his
tendons deserted him.
Even Nestor might well have perished before he went
to the Trojan War; but, using his spear as a pole, he vaulted

powerfully up, to land on a branch of the nearest tree
and there, with his safety assured, look down on the foe
he had fled from.
The boar then savagely whetted his tusks on the trunk of
an oak tree,
threatening death; then putting his trust in his sharpened
weapons,
he ripped with his turned-up snout at the thigh of the
mighty Hippasus.

Now Castor and Pollux, the heavenly twins before
they were stars,*
came forward, both magnificent sights, both riding on
horses
whiter than gleaming snow, both proudly brandishing
spears
which quivered within their grasp as the metal tips
flashed in the sunlight.
Those spears would surely have wounded the boar, but
the bristly creature
had slunk off into the thickets where horses and spears
could not reach him.
Telamon went in pursuit. His excitement made him
unwary;
his foot was caught in the roots of a tree and he fell on
his face.
While Peleus was trying to lift him up, Atalanta was
ready
to notch a swift arrow, bend her bow and send her
shaft flying.
It lodged underneath the animal's ear after narrowly
grazing
the top of his back; so his bristles were stained with a
trickle of blood.
The success of her shot gave joy to the girl, but even
more so
to young Meleäger; he saw the blood first, as the story
goes,

and he was the first to point it out to his comrades and greet
Atalanta: 'A glorious deed! You deserve a reward and shall have it!'
The men were blushing with shame. They boosted morale by shouting
and urging the next man on, then hurling their weapons at random,
so obstructing each other's efforts and making them useless.
There now was Ancaeus, wielding his two-headed axe. Furiously
tempting fortune, he cried: 'My friends, let me show you how far
the arms of a man outclass a mere woman's. Leave this to me!
Latona's daughter herself can protect the boar with her arrows;
my own right hand shall destroy him, despite the will of Diana!'
The words had sprung from his boastful lips in the swell of his pride.
Then lifting the double-headed axe in both of his hands,
he rose high up on his toes, all poised for the downward stroke.
He was bold, but the boar was before him and drove with his two sharp tusks
at the upper part of the groin, where the pathway to death is the shortest.
Ancaeus collapsed; his bowels burst out in a seething mixture
of gore and gut, and the earth beneath him was soaked with his blood.
Pirithoüs,* son of Ixíon, now ventured to enter the battle
against the monster. His strong right hand was shaking his boar-spear,
when Theseus cried out, 'Keep back! Your life is dearer to me

than my own; you are half of my soul. Brave heroes may fight at a prudent
distance. Ancaeus was brave, but his rashness destroyed him.'
With that he himself discharged his weighty bronze-tipped javelin.
Beautifully poised, the weapon seemed likely to reach its mark,
but its flight through the air was blocked by a leafy branch on an oak tree.
Jason also sent his spear flying, and this was diverted
by chance from the boar to an innocent dog who was pierced in the flank;
the weapon ran through the poor yelper and pinned him fast to the ground.
Meleäger's throwing was more successful. He launched two spears:
the first hit the ground, but the second struck home in the back of his quarry.
At once, as the boar struggled wildly, spinning around in a circle,
bubbling with foam at the mouth and streaming with blood from his new wound,
the man who had dealt it advanced, to provoke his prey to fresh fury
and, as it attacked, to bury his gleaming boar-spear deep
in its shoulders. His friends cheered loudly, to signal their joy in his triumph,
eager to clasp the victorious hero's hand in their own.
They gazed in awe at the size of the great brute, sprawling over
so vast an expanse of earth. They still believed it was dangerous
to touch it, but each of them separately dipped his spear in the blood.
Meleäger himself then planted his foot on that merciless head

and hailed Atalanta: 'Now take the prize which is mine by right,
Nonácrian maid! My glory must surely be shared with you.'
At once he presented the girl with his spoils, the spiky hide
of the bristled boar and its head in the pride of its huge white tusks.
Atalanta's joy in the gift was matched by her joy in the giver;
but others were jealous and angry murmurs ran through the crowd.
Meleäger's uncles, Plexippus and Toxeus, stretching their arms out,
shouted, 'Down with those spoils! You're a woman; don't try to usurp
the honours due to us men. You'd better not trust to your beauty
too far. Your generous lover may not be there to defend you!'
At once they seized the spoils from the girl and removed Meleäger's
right to award them. This was too much for a son of Mars.*
Grinding his teeth in rising fury, he tackled them boldly:
'You filchers of others' prizes, you seem unaware of the vital
difference that lies between threats and actions.' Then taking Plexippus
quite by surprise, he plunged his sword through his uncle's heart.
What was Toxeus to do? He wavered, hoping to take revenge
for his brother but also afraid of sharing his brother's fate.
He was not permitted to waver for long. Meleäger's sword,
still warm with the blood of one kinsman, was heated again by the other's.

Queen Althaéa was bearing gifts to the temples in thanks
for her son's great feat, when she saw men bearing her brothers' corpses.

Wildly beating her breast, she filled the streets of the city
with cries of lament and changed her garments from gold
to black.
But as soon as the name of the killer was published, her
sorrow was totally
banished. Her tears dried up and yielded to passion for
vengeance.
At the time when Althaea was giving birth to her son
Meleäger,
a fragment of wood had been cast in the fire on the
hearth by the Three Fates.
Spinning with thumb and finger at destiny's threads,
the Sisters
uttered these words: 'We assign the same life-span to
this wooden
log as we do to this new-born child.' The spell was cast
and the goddesses made their departure. At once the
mother extracted
the burning branch from the flames and doused it in
running water.
For years that log had been hidden away in the depths
of an inner
store-room and, thus preserved, had preserved the life
of the young prince.
His mother now brought it out. She ordered her
servants to lay
some pinewood and kindling, and then she applied the
fatal taper.
Four times she withdrew it. A conflict raged between
mother and sister;
the two names pulled at a single heart in a tug of war.
Often her cheeks grew pale in dread of the crime she
was plotting;
her eyes would as often be red with the burning anger
that glowed there.
One moment her face would assume an expression
suggestive of cruel

menace; the next you might well suppose she was moved by
compassion.
Once her tears had been dried by the heat of her violent
anger,
they gushed once more from her sorrowful eyes. As a vessel
at sea
which is caught between wind and tide and pulled in
different directions,
subject to two strong forces, uncertainly wavers between
them,
so Thestius' daughter wavered between her warring
emotions,
quenching her anger again and again, at once to
rekindle it.
But now the sister began to overpower the mother.
To appease the ghosts of her blood by bloodshed, family
duty
was intermingled with family guilt. When the flames of
devouring
fire grew strong, she prayed that the funeral pyre might
consume
her own flesh also. Grimly clutching the fateful log,
she took her stand, poor lady, before that altar of death,
and cried: 'Euménides, three dread sisters, powers of
punishment,
turn your gaze on these sacred rites of retributive fury!
Vengeance is mine by sin, and death is atoned for by death;
crime must needs be added to crime, and a body to bodies.
Perish the guilt-cursed house in sorrow heaped upon
sorrow!
Is Oeneus blithely to take delight in his son's fine victory,
while Thestius grieves for his loss? Better that both should
mourn.
I pray to the shades and the newly departed souls of my
brethren:
take regard of the honour I show you; accept my sacrifice,
offered at such dear cost, the evil fruit of my own womb! –

Stop, Althaea! You brothers of mine, pray pardon a mother.
I cannot go on; my hands are too weak. I freely admit
he deserves to die; but I cannot become my own son's murderer. –
And so must he go unpunished, to live victorious and mount
the throne of Calydon, puffed with the pride of his impious triumph,
while you lie dead in a handful of ash, poor shivering ghosts?
I cannot allow it. The wretch must die. Let him carry off with him
his father's hopes and his kingdom, and lay his country in ruins! –
Oh, where is my mother's heart, the love that I owe to my own child?
What of the pains I endured as those nine long months went by?
How dearly I wish you had burnt in that earlier fire, and I
had suffered the loss of my baby. You owed your life to my giving;
now owe your death to your own deserts; now take your reward;
now return the life that was doubly given you, once when I bore you,
once when I rescued the log, or lay me next to my brothers.
I wish for his death, but am powerless, confused! One moment I picture
my brothers' wounds and that scene of murderous carnage; but then
my spirit is broken by love and the name that I own as a mother.
Oh, I am lost! Though your triumph is evil, you win, my brothers,

so long as I'm granted a share in the comfort I bring you and follow you
down to the shades.' When she'd spoken these words, she averted her face
as with trembling hand she tossed the death brand into the blaze.
The log itself gave a moan of pain, or so it appeared,
when the fire reluctantly caught at the wood and it burst into flames.
Meleäger, away from the house, knew nothing of this, but the flames
began to burn at him too; he could feel his vitals scorching
with hidden fire. He bravely mastered the terrible pain,
but still it was hard to be facing a bloodless death like a coward.
'Lucky Ancaeus!' he thought; 'he died of his wounds.' Pathetically
moaning, he called on his aged father, his brother and loving
sisters and now, with his dying breath, on the wife he had slept with,
perhaps on his mother too. The fire and his pain flared up
and then subsided again, till both were extinguished together.
His spirit gradually filtered into the insubstantial
air, as the ashes gradually shrouded the glowing embers.

Calydon's heights brought low! All sorrowed, both young and old;
nobles and common folk wailed alike. By the river Evénus
the mothers of Calydon tore at their tresses and smote on their bosoms.
Sprawled on the ground, Meleäger's old father begrimed his face
and his hoary hairs in the dust, cursing the length of his days.
Aware of her frightful deed, his mother had used her guilty

hand to punish herself by thrusting a sword in her vitals.
As for the dismal plaints of his wretched sisters, I could not
rehearse them, had I been granted by heaven a hundred tongues,
unlimited wit and the inspiration of all the Muses.
Reckless of all decorum, they bruised their breasts with their fist-blows;
and, while the body was there, they stroked it over and over,
kissing their brother and kissing the bier now laid on the pyre.
When he'd burnt to ashes, they gathered them up and pressed the urn
to their hearts; then prostrate over his tomb, they clung to the gravestone,
weeping until their tears poured into the name that was carved there.
Sated at last with the havoc she'd wreaked on the house of Partháön,
Diana made feathers sprout from their bodies – from all except Gorge
and Deïaníra.* She stretched long wings on the arms of the rest,
she turned their lips into horny beaks; and thus transformed
into guinea-fowl,* up the sisters were lifted and launched on the breezes.

ACHELOÜS, THE NAIADS AND PERIMELE

Theseus having discharged his role in the communal boar hunt,
was now on his journey home to Eréchtheus' city of Athens.
His way was barred by a river in flood, the god Achelóüs,*

who forced him to wait: 'Pray enter my house, illustrious hero
of Cecrops' line. Do not trust yourself to these greedy waters.
Beware of the thick tree-trunks and zigzagging boulders, rolling
and crashing down. I have seen the flood-tide sweeping away
the lofty stables, cattle and all, that adjoin my margins;
the ox's strength and the horse's speed have availed them nothing.
After the snows on the mountains have melted, this torrent has also
claimed the lives of many young men in its eddying currents.
Safer to rest for a while, till my swollen stream is confined
to its wonted limits and narrowed down to its natural channel.'
'Yes, Acheloüs,' replied the hero, 'I'll gladly avail
myself of your house and advice.' And he made good use of them both.
Theseus entered a grotto of porous pumice and rough-grained
tufa; the soft earth floor beneath him was watery moss,
while the ceiling was panelled with rows of mussel and murex shells.
Now that the sun god had run two thirds of his course to the evening,
Theseus and his companions reclined on their several couches.
On one side sat Pirithoüs, son of Ixion; there sat
Lelex of Troézen, starting now to go grey round the temples,
and other guests whom the Acarnánian river had honoured
no less, in his pleasure at welcoming so distinguished a visitor.
At once barefooted nymphs set tables beside them and loaded

these with a lavish banquet. Then, when the food was removed,
unwatered wine was offered in jewelled cups. At this point
Theseus, looking over the sea below them and pointing,
enquired, 'What place is that? And tell me the name of the island
facing us there, which hardly looks like a single island.'
The river-god answered: 'The land you see doesn't form one whole.
Five islands are there, but the distance obscures the gaps that divide them.
Diana's resentment in sending the boar was nothing to wonder at.
These islands used to be naiads, who put ten bullocks to slaughter
and then invited the rural gods to share in the feasting;
but when they started the ritual dance, they forgot about me.
I swelled in my rage and swept along in as mighty a spate
as I ever achieve, the power of my waters matching the power
of my wrath. I sundered forest from forest and field from field,
and rolled the place where the nymphs were standing into the waves –
they remembered me then. My waters next combined with the sea
to split the continuous land mass and break it up into five,
to form the Echínades, Hedgehog Isles, that you see in mid-ocean.
But look! You can spot it yourself, far off in the distance, my favourite,
a single island beyond the rest. Periméle the sailors call it. I loved that girl and stole her virginity from her.

Her father Hippódamas took it unkindly and forcibly pushed
his erring daughter over a cliff to be drowned in the waves.
I caught her up and, supporting her while she swam, cried out:
"Neptune, lord of the trident, whose realm is the wandering ocean,*
second alone to the heavens, I pray for your help! Grant space
to an innocent drowned by a cruel father, or let her become
a space in herself." As I spoke, new land enfolded her floating
limbs, and an island of substance grew from her transformed body.'

PHILEMON AND BAUCIS

The river-god held his peace. His amazing story had moved
the whole of the company. One poured scorn on their credulous wonder,
Pirithoüs, a young tearaway, who had no use for the gods.
'Pure fiction!' he said. 'Acheloüs, you credit the gods with too much
power, if you think they create and then alter the shapes in Nature.'
All were aghast at these blasphemous words and voiced disapproval,
especially Lelex, whose mind reflected his riper years.
'The power of heaven cannot be measured,' he answered firmly.
'It knows no bounds. Whatever the gods decree is accomplished.
To ease your impious doubts, you should visit the Phrygian hills

to look at an oak tree and linden nearby, both ringed by a low wall.
I've been to the place myself, when Píttheus sent me from Troezen
to Phrygia's lands, where his father Pelops had once been king.
Not far from the spot is a fen which used to be habitable land
but is now under water and haunted merely by coots and divers.
Jupiter once came here, disguised as a mortal, and with him
his son, the messenger Mercury, wand and wings set aside.
Looking for shelter and rest, they called at a thousand homesteads;
a thousand doors were bolted against them. One house, however,
did make them welcome, a humble abode with a roof of straw
and marsh reed, one that knew its duty to gods and men.
Here good Philémon and Baucis had happily passed their youth
and here they had reached old age, enduring their poverty lightly
by owning it freely and being content with the little they had.
If you came, it made no difference to ask for the masters or servants;
the household consisted of two, each giving and taking the orders.
'So when the gods had found their way to this humble dwelling
(the door was so low, they could only cross the threshold by stooping),
Philemon moved forward a bench and asked them to rest their limbs,

while Baucis bustled around to spread a rough covering over it,
then crossed to the hearth to brush the wood-ash away from the embers
of yesterday's fire and bring it to life by feeding it leaves
and dry tree bark, with only her feeble puffing for bellows;
then fetching some splits of kindling and pieces of dry branch down
from the roof, she broke them up further and set them under her bronze pot.
Next she stripped the outer leaves of the cabbage her husband
had picked from his watered garden, while he, with the help of a forked stick,
lifted a chine of bacon off from the blackened beam,
and chopped a piece from the back they had carefully saved for so long,
then dropped the cut in the pot to cook in the boiling water.
While all were waiting, they passed the time in agreeable talk
and the hours went by in a flash. On a hook there was hanging a sturdy-
handled bucket of beechwood, and this was filled with warm water
so that the guests could wash their limbs. A sedge-stuffed cushion
was laid on top of a couch with a frame and legs of willow-wood;
then it was covered with drapes which were only brought out on special
occasions – still tawdry and worn, if they didn't disgrace the couch.
'The gods reclined. With her skirts tucked up and with shaking hands,
old Baucis positioned a three-legged table beside them; but one

of the legs was too short and she had to level it up with a potsherd.
Once the table was steady, she wiped its surface with green mint,
then laid a spread of unsalted olives, both green and black,
endive and radish, pickle of autumn cornel-cherries,
cream cheese and eggs very lightly cooked on a moderate ash-heat,
served in earthenware dishes. When that was finished, a moulded
wine-bowl of similar "silver" was set on the table with goblets
carved out of beech and coated with golden wax on the inside.
After that it did not take long for the hot main course
to be brought from the hearth. The young wine next was returned to the table,*
but soon removed for a while to clear the space for dessert,
consisting of nuts with a mixture of figs and wrinkled palm-dates,
plums and sweet-smelling apples arranged in broad flat baskets,
grapes new-picked from the purple vine, with a honeycomb placed
in the table's centre. To crown this humble fare, the smiles
on the old folk's faces betokened a wealth of unfailing kindness.
'Meanwhile, whenever the mixing-bowl got empty, it seemed
to refill of its own accord, with the wine welling up by itself.
Stunned and scared by this wonder, Philemon, trembling, and Baucis
lifted their upturned hands to heaven and fervently prayed

for forgiveness after serving so poorly prepared a repast.
They then set out to placate their mysterious guests by killing
the goose, their only one, which guarded the tiny farm;
but the bird kept fluttering around, exhausting the elderly couple
and long eluding their grasp, till at last it appeared to have flown
to the gods themselves for refuge. "You must not kill it," they said.
"We are gods. Your neighbours shall pay the price they deserve for their wicked
impiety. You alone shall be spared from the coming disaster.
We simply ask you to leave your home and walk in our footsteps
up to the mountains." The couple obeyed and, using their sticks
to support them, they wearily climbed the long steep slope. They were just
a bowshot away from the top, when they turned and saw that the other
houses were under water, with only their own still standing.
And while they gazed in amazement, lamenting the fate of their neighbours,
their little old cottage, a small home even for two to inhabit,
was changed to a temple. The fork-shaped props were replaced by columns,
the thatch turned yellow, and now it appeared that the roof was gilded,
the doors engraved with reliefs and the ground paved over with marble.
'At last King Jupiter gently addressed them: "You good old man,
and you the wife that his goodness deserves, now name whatever

boon you desire." Philemon conferred for a moment
with Baucis,
before advising the gods of their joint decision: "We
ask
to be priests and to guard your temple; and since we
have passed our years
together in peace, let the same hour carry us off, so I
need not
look on my dear wife's grave, nor she have to bury my
body."
Their wish was granted; as long as life was allowed
them, they served
as the temple's guardians. When time had taken its
final toll,
and while they were casually standing in front of the
steps of the building,
telling the sanctuary's history, both Philemon and
Baucis
witnessed their partner sprouting leaves on their worn
old limbs.
As the tops of the trees spread over their faces, they
spoke to each other
once more while they could. "Farewell, my beloved!"
they said in a single
breath, as the bark closed over their lips and concealed
them for ever.
Still to this day the peasants of Phrygia point to the oak
and the linden nearby which once were the forms of
Philemon and Baucis.
The story was told me by trustworthy elders who had
no reason
to lie or deceive. I saw for myself the wreaths that were
hanging
upon the branches and, placing a fresh wreath,
murmured, "Let those
who are loved by the gods be gods, and those who
have worshipped be worshipped."'

ERYSICHTHON

Lelex fell silent. All had been moved by the tale and its teller,
Theseus especially. 'Tell me more of the wonders performed
by the gods!' he cried. Then leaning upon his elbow, the river
of Calydon said to him: 'Bravest of heroes, we know of a number
whose form has changed only once and never again been altered.
Others have had the power to assume a whole range of shapes,
like Próteus, a god who dwells in the earth-encompassing ocean.
Men saw him both as a handsome youth and a ravening lion;
at other times he became a savage boar, or a bull
with a pair of menacing horns, or a serpent, dangerous to handle.
He could often appear like the stones and often again like the trees;
sometimes he'd turn into flowing water and take the form
of a river; sometimes he'd change to the contrary element, fire.
'Erysíchthon's daughter, Mestra,* the wife of Autólycus, also
possessed such a power. Her father was one who despised the gods,
and the savour of burning sacrifice never rose up from his altars.
He, as the story goes, audaciously took an axe
to the grove of Ceres and desecrated her ancient woodland.
Standing there was a mighty oak of great antiquity,
a wood on its own. It was hung all round with suppliant wool-bands,

votive tablets and garlands offered for prayers fulfilled.
In its shade the dryads often conducted their festal dances;
hand in hand they would trip and circle around the trunk,
whose girth was more than twenty-two feet, while its height exceeded
the rest of the trees by as much as they topped the grass beneath them.
But that was no cause for the wild Thessalian brute Erysichthon
to hold his axe at a distance. He ordered his slaves to get cutting
the sacred oak at its base; then, seeing them shrink from the task,
the infidel seized an axe from one of them, savagely shouting:
"This needn't be merely the goddess' tree, but the goddess herself,
for all I care, but its leafy top must be brought to the ground!"
With that, as he raised his threatening weapon to strike from the side,
the oak of Ceres gave a great shudder and uttered a groan;
a pallor crept over the acorns, the leaves and the length of the branches.
As soon as that impious hand had inflicted a wound on the trunk,
blood poured from the shattered bark as it streams from the severed neck
of a huge sacrificial bull when it falls in front of the altar.
All were appalled, but one who was bolder than all the others
endeavoured to halt this evil and counter the axe's cruelty.

Seeing him, "Here's the reward for your piety!" cried Erysichthon,
and switched the axe from the tree to his servant to lop the man's head,
before returning to hack away at the oak's great side.
Suddenly then, from the heart of the tree, a voice rang out:
"I am the nymph, beloved of Ceres, who dwells in this oak!
I prophesy now as I die. Vengeance will come! You shall pay
the price for your impious deed and make amends for my death!"
But the monster pursued his crime to the end. Reeling under
his numberless blows, heaved down by ropes, the oak tree finally
crashed to the ground and toppled a mass of the forest beneath it.
'Horrified by this loss to the woods and of one of their sisters,
the dryads all vested themselves in garments of mourning black
and hastened to Ceres, to beg her to punish the vile Erysichthon.
The goddess agreed and, as she nodded her beautiful head,
she shook the fields, now heavily laden with ripening corn,
and contrived a revenge which might have excited pity – except
that no one could possibly pity a man who had acted so shamefully.
"Let pestilent Hunger torture his body!" was her grim sentence.
And since she could not approach that demon herself (for the Fates
will never let Ceres and Hunger meet), she called to a rural
óreăd, one of the mountain spirits, and gave her instructions:

"Go to a place on the farthest borders of icy Scythia,
gloomy terrain, where the earth is barren of crops and of trees.
Sluggish Cold has its home in that land, with Pallor and Trembling,
ravenous Hunger too. Tell Hunger to fasten herself
in the cursed maw of that impious man, and never to yield
to abundance of food. Let her vie with my nourishing power – and defeat it!
Do not be dismayed by the length of your journey. Take my chariot,
harness my serpents and guide their course through the heavens on high!"
'The oreäd took the dragon-chariot and drove through the air
till she landed in Scythia. There on the heights of the rugged Caucasus
mountains, she freed her snakes from the yoke and quickly departed
in search of Hunger. She tracked her down in a stony wasteland.
The spirit was plucking with nail and tooth at the scanty herbage.
Her hair was tangled, her eyes like hollows, complexion pallid,
her lips grimy and grey, her throat scabrous and scurfy.
Her skin was so hard and fleshless, the entrails were visible through it;
her shrunken bones protruded under her sagging loins;
her belly was merely an empty space; her pendulous breasts
appeared to be strung on nothing except the cage of her backbone;
her leanness had swollen all of her joints; the rounds of her knees
were bulbous; her ankles were grossly enlarged to a puffy excrescence.

The oreäd spied her but, lacking the courage to move any closer,
carefully kept her distance to give her the goddess's message.
Instantly, though she remained far off and despite her recent
arrival, she felt a sensation of hunger and turned the chariot
round to pilot the serpents back through the sky to Thessaly.
'Hunger acted on Ceres' bidding, although their functions
are always opposed. She directed her flight on the wind to the palace
as ordered, and rapidly made her way to the reprobate's chamber.
It was night and she found him buried in sleep. Then twining her arms
around him, she poured herself deep inside as she breathed on his throat,
on his breast, on his mouth, and dispersed starvation throughout his veins.
Her mission accomplished, she left the world of plenty behind her
and took herself back to the caves she knew in the mansions of want.
'Gentle sleep on her peaceful wings still held Erysichthon
fast in her soothing embrace. In his dreams he craved for a meal,
as he munched away on a void and ground his teeth to no purpose,
gulping down imaginary food in his cheated oesophagus,
vainly devouring a banquet of air without any substance.
But when he awoke, a passion for eating was raging inside him,
reigning supreme in his ravenous gullet and burning belly.
At once he demands to be filled with the produce of earth, sea and sky.
When tables loaded with food are provided, he moans, "I am starving!"

A banquet is laid for him; "Food!" he demands. What could satisfy cities
or even a nation will not be enough for his single appetite.
The fuller he crammed his insatiable maw, his hunger grew stronger,
just as the ocean absorbs the streams that flow from a whole land,
yet still unsatisfied drains the waters of far-off rivers;
or just as a raging fire will never refuse any fuel
but burns an infinite number of logs (the more it is fed,
the more it requires, abundance merely augmenting its greed),
so a feast had only to touch Erysichthon's impious lips,
and he asked for more. His food had simply become a reason
for food. His eating always led on to an empty stomach.

'Appetite now had diminished his father's wealth, as he swallowed it
down in his belly's abyss; but the pangs of his desperate hunger
remained undiminished. The flames of his still unsatisfied gluttony
rose to new heights. At last, with his capital wasted inside him,
his daughter was all he had left. Though she little deserved such a father,
he sold her off with the rest. Too noble to tolerate slavery,
Mestra ran to the edge of the sea and, stretching her arms out,
shouted to Neptune: "You snatched the prize of my maidenly virtue;
now snatch me away from life as a drudge!" The god who had raped her

did not say no to her prayer. Though her owner was in pursuit
and had just caught sight of her, Neptune altered her form and gave her
the face of a man and a fisherman's garb. When her master set eyes
on this stranger, he said: "Hey, you there, casting your line and hook
with a tiny morsel to hide it, I wish you a clear calm sea
and a gullible fish which will rise to your bait till it's caught and landed.
Tell me, where is the woman I saw just now? She was standing
here on the shore in shabby clothes, with her hair dishevelled.
I saw her, I tell you. You must know, surely. Her tracks stop here!"
Mestra saw that the god's protection was working. Delighted
at being questioned about herself, she quickly responded:
"Excuse me, sir, whoever you are. My eyes have been fixed
on the water here. In my concentration on fishing, they've never
wandered. I swear by Neptune, the god of the sea, who I pray
will assist my skill, throughout this time no man has stood
on this part of the shore, except for myself, and no woman either."
Her owner believed her, turned on his heels and trudged through the sand
as he went off, duped. And Mestra recovered her normal shape.
'When her father saw that his daughter's body could be transformed,
he sold her a number of times to different owners; but then
she would change to a bird or a mare or a cow or a deer and escape from them,

so providing her gluttonous sire with his fraudulent
fodder.
But after his violent affliction had wasted away the whole
of his substance and nothing was left to fuel his
virulent malady,
he finally started to bite his own limbs and tear them
apart
with his jaws; the poor wretch nourished his body by
making it smaller.

'Why should I dwell on the stories of others? I,
Acheloüs,
possess the power to alter my shape in a limited
number
of ways, young Theseus. Sometimes I am as you see me
now;
sometimes I change to a serpent or lead the herd as a
strong-horned
bull – or did when I could. But now one side of my
forehead
has lost its defence* – you can see for yourself.' And he
sighed as he ended.

BOOK 9

Hercules is the key figure in the next group of stories. *Acheloüs and Hercules* (1–97) is a lively account of how the river-god fought with the hero for the hand of Deïanira and acquired his broken horn. The next two episodes, *Hercules and Nessus* (98–133) and *The Death of Hercules* (134–272), are so obviously based on Sophocles' play *The Women of Trachis* that we may think of Ovid here as doing his 'Sophocles turn'. The poet's narrative displays his usual vividness, but he concentrates more on the gorier details than on the tragic situation of Hercules' betrayed wife, Deïanira (he had to some extent explored this previously in *Heroides* 9). Furthermore, he uses the hero's immolation and apotheosis as the occasion for a satirically pompous speech from Jupiter, which some may find the most enjoyable passage in the whole of this section.

The humorous tone continues in *Alcmena and Galanthis* (273–323), which tells the story of Hercules' birth. *Dryope* (324–93) is similarly lightweight: there is a kind of schmaltzy pathos in the tale of the girl who picks a water plant to amuse her baby and is turned to a lotus tree herself. In *Iolaus and Callirhoe's Sons* (394–417) we have two metamorphoses involving human age, one of rejuvenation, the other of acceleration. The passage is (for us) rather tiresomely allusive and only intelligible with explanatory notes; but it does enable Ovid to work in some more of the standard Theban legend. *Miletus* (418–52) gives us the pleasure of another pompous speech from Jupiter and takes us on, by an artificial transition, to one of Jupiter's sons, our old friend Minos, who is now *very* old and in fear of a young rival Miletus – who flees from Crete to found

a new city in Asia Minor and begets the twins, Byblis and Caunus, who are the subject of the next story.

The rest of the book is superb, with Ovid exploring and entering sympathetically into two cases of what might be considered 'abnormal' passions. In *Byblis* (454–665) he takes a popular Hellenistic Greek story and makes it very much his own. His heroine falls desperately in love with her twin brother, and her feelings are chiefly expressed in three major passages: first a long monologue in which she attempts to justify incest, then in a letter of confession which she pens to Caunus, and finally in a second monologue after her advances have been rejected with horror. Drawn-out and rhetorical as all this may appear, it makes for extremely compelling reading and recitation, and Byblis' eventual metamorphosis comes across as a naturally contrived and almost consoling conclusion.

Iphis (666–797) is in some ways a parallel story but also a contrast. This explores the predicament of a girl brought up as a boy (to save her from being killed at birth) and later betrothed to a girl with whom she is genuinely in love. Iphis in her monologue is made to perceive her feelings as monstrous and unnatural, 'a new kind of passion', a view which may have been shared by some of Ovid's audience. However that may be, we are evidently intended to identify with Iphis as we did with Byblis. If we do feel embarrassed, we may be reassured by the story's happy ending. Where Byblis had to fade away in her tears to a stream, Iphis is divinely awarded the necessary sex-change in the nick of time. He and Ianthe can be married and presumably live happily ever after.

ACHELOÜS AND HERCULES

'Why are you sighing and why is the horn on your forehead broken?'
Théseus asked Achelóüs. The god of the river, whose unkempt
hair was crowned with a garland of reeds, thus made his reply:
'What a dismal gift* to demand! Who'd willingly give an account
of his own defeats? But I'll tell you the story from start to finish;
the shame of losing the battle was less than the glory of fighting it –
falling to such a distinguished man is a great consolation.
Perhaps you have heard the name of the beautiful Deïaníra,
whose hand in marriage was jealously sought by an army of suitors,
including myself. As soon as I'd entered her father's palace,
"Son of Parthάon," I said, "I ask to marry your daughter."
Hercules said the same, and the others withdrew in our favour.
My rival pleaded that Jove was his father* and mentioned his glorious
labours, the dangerous tasks he'd been set by his stepmother Juno.
I urged in reply: "What disgrace for a god to give way to a mortal!"
(The hero was not yet a god.) "Here am I, the lord of the river
which winds its way through your lands, not urging my suit as a stranger
dispatched from alien shores, but as one of your fellow countrymen,
part of your kingdom. I say that it shouldn't be held against me

that royal Juno does not detest me and I'm not sentenced
to endless labours at her command. Now, son of
Alcména,
as for your boast that Jupiter happens to be your father,
you're either a liar or else you must be a bastard. The
truth
of your claim depends on your mother's adultery. Make
up your mind, then:
either the story's a fiction, or else your birth was a
scandal."
'Hercules watched me, as I was making my case, with
a glowering
look in his eyes. His anger was blazing, he couldn't
control it;
and then he retorted, "My hand has more power to
persuade than my tongue.
I'll allow you to win the debate, so long as I win in the
fighting,"
and forward he stalked looking fierce. As I had been
speaking so boldly,
I hadn't the face to retreat. My garments of green were
discarded;
I put up my arms and, holding my hands crooked round
at the ready
in front of my chest, I was all prepared to wrestle with
Hercules.
First he gathered some dust in his hollowed palms and
sprinkled it
over me; next I covered his body with yellow-gold sand.
Then he lunged at my neck and my nimble legs in
succession –
or else he pretended to do so – and went for each part of
my body.
My defence was my solid weight, so all his attempts
came to nothing.
I stood like a massive rock, assailed by the roaring
waves

in a storm but never dislodged, secure in its own great bulk.
For one brief moment we moved apart, then returned to the battle,
standing fast in our tracks, determined not to give ground.
My foot was now touching his, my body was thrust well forward,
his fingers were gripped in mine and our foreheads were forced together.
I tell you, we could have been two strong bulls ferociously butting
to win the prize of the sleekest cow in the whole of the pasture,
with all of the herd looking on in a flurry of terror, uncertain
which one of the two will win the victory of such great lordship.
Three times the magnificent Hercules unsuccessfully tried
to thrust me back as I pressed against him; at last, at the fourth
attempt, he managed to break my hold and to shake me off.
I was thrown off balance, and then – I'm determined to tell you the truth –
he rapidly turned me round and clung to my back with his full weight.
Believe me, Theseus – I'm not inventing the details to win myself
glory – I felt I was being crushed by the weight of a mountain.
But still, with a mighty effort, I slipped my arms, all dripping
with sweat, under his and wrenched my limbs from his bearlike hug.
While I panted for breath, before I recovered my strength, he was on me
again, with his hands at my throat. And that was the end of the battle.

He forced me down to my knees, and I felt the sand in my teeth.
'Since I was weaker in manly strength, I turned to my own arts,
slithering out of the hero's grasp in the form of a long snake.
My body was looped into sinuous coils and I flickered my forked tongue,
hissing like fury. But Hercules laughed and made fun of my magic:
"Dealing with snakes is a task I used to perform in my cradle!*
You may surpass other snakes, Acheloüs, but really, a single
serpent is hardly a threat when compared with the Hydra of Lerna.
That monster blossomed and throve on its wounds; when one of its numerous
heads was cut off, it always recovered by sprouting another
two heads in its place. Destruction caused it to grow, as it put forth
branches of vipers sprung from the carnage. But I, great Hercules,
mastered the creature and cauterized each neck as I lopped it.
What do you think will happen to you, who are merely disguised
as a snake, in dubious form, with weapons not yours by nature?"
He then proceeded to shackle the top of my neck in his fingers.
Helplessly choking, as if my throat had been gripped by pincers,
I struggled to tear my jaws away from his strangling thumbs;
but once again I was beaten. I still had a third shape left,

so I changed once more to a savage bull and returned to the fray.
He attacked from the left and clasped my muscular neck in his arms;
I then dashed forward, but Hercules followed and pulled against me;
soon he had forced my hard horns down till they caught in the soil,
and had laid me flat on top of the sand. But he still wasn't satisfied.
Grasping one of my horns in his brutal hand, he broke it,
tough as it was, and tore it away from my forehead, leaving me
maimed. The horn was filled by the naiads with fruit and with fragrant
flowers and, thus made holy, enriches the Spirit of Plenty.'*
The river-god ended his tale and one of his servants, a nymph
attired as Diana, with hair spread over her shoulders, came forward,
displaying the Horn of Plenty and carrying all the choicest
fruits of the autumn to serve to the guests for the second course.
Dawn broke; as the sun's first rays were striking the mountain peaks,
the young men went on their way. They'd decided no longer to wait
till the river was calmly flowing in peace and the flood had completely
subsided. The country-god Acheloüs then hid his face,
and plunged his head with its wrenched-off horn in the midst of his own waves.

HERCULES AND NESSUS

Although the river-god grieved for the loss of his beautiful horn,
he was otherwise safe and sound. He could easily cover his damaged
head with a garland of willow foliage or reeds from the stream.
But Nessus, the brutal centaur, was wholly destroyed by his passion
for Deïanira and shot in the back by a flying arrow.
Hercules, with his newly-wed bride, was travelling home
to the city of Tiryns and came to the fast-flowing river Evénus.
The stream was swollen and higher than usual because of the winter
rains, and the swirl of the eddying currents made it impassable.
Hercules held no fears for himself but was somewhat concerned
for his wife, when the sturdy Nessus, who knew the shallows, approached him.
'Hercules, listen!' he said. 'Do accept my help. I'll deposit
Your wife on the farther bank, while you swim across on your own.'
Deïanira was pale with terror and frightened of Nessus
no less than the stream; but her husband trustingly handed her over.
At once, then, just as he was, weighed down by his quiver and lion skin
(he'd tossed his club and his bow across to the other bank),
he plunged in, crying, 'I've beaten one river, and this is the second!'

Too proud to depend on the waters obligingly taking him over,
he didn't wait to explore where the current was most in his favour.
Soon he had swum to the bank and was lifting his bow off the ground
when he heard a scream. It came from his wife, and Nessus was starting
to breach his trust. 'Hey, where are you hurrying?' Hercules shouted.
'Don't think you can make it, you violent savage! Nessus, you monster,
I'm talking to you! Now listen and don't interfere with my bride.
If you feel no respect for *me*, at least your father Ixíon's
wheel* should warn you against the rape of another man's woman.
You shan't get away and had better not trust in those horse's hooves.
It's my shafts, not my feet, that will catch you up!' And he put his words
to the proof by shooting an arrow, which pierced the fugitive's back
right through to the chest, where the point with its venomous barb protruded.
As soon as the centaur extracted the weapon, his blood leapt out
in a double spurt, commingled with gore from the venomous Hydra.*
Nessus caught some of the mixture and whispered, 'You'll pay for my death!'
And then presented his blood-soaked tunic to Deïanira,
a gift which he told her could serve to excite the love of her husband.

THE DEATH OF HERCULES

A number of years went by, and the fame of Hercules' deeds
had spread through the world and imbued his stepmother Juno with hatred.
Oechália conquered, he now was about to fulfil his vows
at Jupiter's temple on Cape Cenaéum, when chattering Rumour
hurried ahead and reached the ears of Deïanira,
Rumour whose joy it is to embroider the truth with falsehood
and grows by her lies to gigantic proportions from tiny beginnings:
'Amphítryon's son is burning with love for Princess Íole!*'
Hercules' wife believed what she heard; the thought of a rival
filled her with dread. At first the poor woman indulged her distress
in a deluge of weeping; but later she asked herself, 'What is the point?
These tears will only give Iole pleasure. What's more, she will shortly
be here. I must therefore make haste and think of a plan while I may,
before my place in my husband's bed has been fully usurped.
Should I say how I feel, or be silent? Stay here, or return to Cálydon?
Leave my own house, or at least put up some show of resistance?
Perhaps I had best remember my brother, the brave Meleäger,
and strike out boldly. Why shouldn't I show how deadly an injured

woman's resentment can be, by cutting this concubine's throat?'
She considered a number of different plans; but the one she preferred
was to send her husband the shirt which was stained with the blood of the centaur
Nessus, in hope of regaining Hercules' faltering love.
Unaware what sorrow the tunic would bring her, she gave it to Lichas,
a servant who knew as little as she did, with honeyed instructions
to offer this gift to her husband. Her husband in innocence took it,
and vested himself in the shirt which the Hydra's venom had poisoned.
The fires had been lit, and now he was offering incense, uttering
prayers and pouring libations of wine on the marble altar.
The poisoned shirt was exposed to the heat, and its power was released
by the flames to creep on its cancerous way through Hercules' body.
So long as he could, he suppressed his groans like the hero he was.
But after endurance was conquered by pain, he pushed the whole altar
over and filled Mount Oeta's* forests with terrible cries.
He struggled at once to tear the lethal robe from his shoulders;
but where it yielded, it tore at his skin. Revolting to detail,
it either stuck to his limbs as he tried in vain to remove it,
or else it exposed the bleeding flesh and the massive bones.
Even his blood gave a hiss, like the sound of a plate of hot metal
plunged into icy water, and boiled in the fire of the poison.
The greedy flames relentlessly sucked deep into his vitals.
Black droplets of sweat exuded and trickled all over his body.

The charring tendons crackled and snapped. The invisible canker
melted the marrow inside his bones. Then he raised his hands
to the stars and cried: 'Now feast on my ruin, Saturnian Juno!
Feast, cruel goddess! Look down from above on this scene of destruction
and glut the desires of your brutal heart! Or else, if my plight
cries out to be pitied even by you, my inveterate enemy,
racked as I am by harrowing torture, relieve me of life,
the life that I hate, the life that was destined for nothing but labours.
Death will now be a boon and a worthy gift from my stepmother.
'Was it for this* that I mastered Busíris who fouled his temples
with strangers' blood? That I stole from the violent giant Antaéus
the strength that his mother, the Earth, supplied? That three-bodied Géryon,
three-headed Cérberus failed to unnerve me? And was it for this
that my hands were able to break the horns of the Cretan bull,
that I cleansed the Augéan stables and shot the Stymphálian birds,
that I caught the deer of Diana in Mount Parthénius' forests;
stole Hippólyta's golden belt by the river Thermódon,
and captured the apples so closely watched by the sleepless dragon?
Was it for this that I conquered the centaurs, and overpowered
the boar which was wasting Arcádia's fields? That even the Hydra

gained nothing by growing two heads to replace each one she had lost?
Remember too that, as soon as I saw Diomédes' horses
fattened on human blood with their mangers cluttered with mangled
corpses, I slaughtered them all and destroyed their master beside them.
Mine are the hands which crushed the life from the lion of Neméa;
mine is the head which supported the sky.* Yes, Jove's cruel wife
must be weary of setting me tasks, while I am not weary of doing them.
'Now I am faced with a new affliction, which cannot be conquered
by courage or all of the weapons I own. A devouring fire
is roaming the depths of my lungs and consuming the whole of my body.
Eurýstheus, though, is alive and well! Can anyone still
believe that the gods exist?' So speaking, Hercules stumbled
in agony over Mount Oeta's heights, like a wounded bull
with a hunting spear in its back when the frightened assailant has fled.
Imagine the hero, constantly groaning and constantly roaring,
constantly trying in vain to tear every stitch of his garments
away from his body, uprooting the tree-trunks or venting his anger
against the mountains or stretching his arms to his father's domain.
There was Lichas, cowering down in the niche of a rock!
When Hercules saw him, he shouted with all the fury his torment
could muster, 'Lichas! Did *you* deliver this present of death?
Will *you* be my killer?' The servant was trembling and white with fear,

and said a few nervous words in excuse. But while he was speaking
and on the point of throwing his arms round Hercules' knees,
the hero grabbed hold of him, whirled him round several times, and tossed him
into the sea of Euboéa with greater force than a catapult.
As Lichas fell through the air, his body started to harden.
They say that the rain when condensed by the icy blasts of the wind
is turned into snow, and the soft light substance of swirling flakes
is later congealed and frozen hard into pellets of hail.
That is what happened to Lichas, according to ancient tradition:
when tossed through the void by those powerful arms, he was bloodless with terror
and drained of all moisture; so thus he was changed into solid stone.
Even today, in the sea of Euboea, a low rock rises
out of the waves with an outline that hints at the form of a man.
Sailors are frightened to step on this rock, as though it could feel,
and the name they give it is 'Lichas'.
But what then happened to Hercules?
Felling some of the trees on the heights of Oeta, he built them
into a pyre; and to set it alight he employed Philoctétes.
To him he entrusted his famous bow and the quiver containing
the arrows destined one day to revisit the kingdom of Troy.*
And while the flames were licking the sides of the funeral pyre,

Hercules covered the piled-up wood with the skin of the lion
of Nemea, then laid himself down on the pyre with his club for a pillow,
smiling as if he were gently reclining, a guest at a banquet,
crowned with a garland and quaffing the unmixed juice of the vineyard.

The flames were rising, spreading all round and crackling loudly,
licking away at the limbs of the hero, who calmly awaited
a foe he despised. The gods were afraid for the Earth's great champion;
but Jupiter, sensing their fear and beaming with pure satisfaction,
grandly addressed them: 'You gods, this anxiety of yours is a pleasure
to me. I offer myself wholehearted congratulations
that I should be called the father and king of a people that *cares*,
that a son of mine should be also supported by *your* good wishes.
This support is a tribute, I'm sure, to his own magnificent exploits,
but I am myself in your debt. Now truly, my faithful subjects,
you mustn't be needlessly frightened. Ignore those flames on Mount Oeta.
The hero who conquered all will conquer the fire you are watching.
Vulcan's power will only affect the part he derives
from his mother's side. The part he derives from me is eternal,
it cannot be touched by death and is fully resistant to fire.
This part, when its time on earth is complete, will be welcomed by me
to the realms of the sky, and I trust this action of mine will give pleasure

to *all* of the gods. But if any among you by chance is against
the admission of Hercules here as a god, he may grudge the reward,
but will know it was richly deserved and grant his reluctant approval.'
The gods were all in agreement. Even his royal consort
appeared to be happy, except for her one black look of annoyance
on Jupiter's final words, when he'd singled her out for a black mark.
Meanwhile, all that the flames could ravage had been disposed of
by Vulcan. Hercules' body no longer survived in a form
which others could recognize. Every feature he owed to his mother
had gone, and he only preserved the marks of his father Jupiter.
Just as a snake which has shed old age with its sloughed-off skin
will frolic in youthful freshness, its new scales brilliantly glinting,
so when the hero of Tiryns discarded his mortal frame,
he gathered strength in his better endowment, he grew in stature,
and now was invested with majesty, weight and an awesome authority.*
Jove, his almighty father, swept him up through the hollow
clouds in his four-horsed chariot, home to the glittering stars.

ALCMENA AND GALANTHIS

Atlas felt the additional weight.* But Eurystheus' anger
was far from exhausted. He savagely vented his hate for their father

on Hercules' children. The hero's aged mother, Alcmena,
who'd fretted so long, at least could weep on Iole's shoulder
and tell her about the labours her son had performed all over
the world, as well as her own misfortunes. On Hercules' orders,
Hyllus his son had taken the girl to his heart and his bed,
and she was expecting a child of his noble blood. Alcmena
then said to Iole: 'Now, let's hope that the gods will be kind
to *you* and shorten the length of your pain when your time arrives
and you call in your fear on Ilithýia, the goddess of childbirth.
That goddess, on Juno's prompting, was most unhelpful to *me*.
When my nine months' waiting was over and Hercules, great performer
of labours, was due to be born, my womb was stretched to its limit;
the child that I carried was huge – so huge you could easily tell
it was fathered by Jove. When I went into labour, the strain was too great
to endure for long. Even now, as I tell you, an icy shiver
runs down my spine and some of the pangs return with the memory.
Seven whole days and seven whole nights I was racked with torture,
exhausted by pain. I stretched my arms to the heavens and shrieked
as I prayed to Lucína* and all the Kneelers, the gods of confinement.
Lucina arrived, I can tell you, but Juno had bribed her beforehand
and she was willing to sacrifice me to the spite of the goddess.

As soon as she heard my groans, Lucina sat on the altar
in front of the doors, with her right knee crossed hard over her left
and her hands with interlocked fingers firmly pressing on top,
while she silently muttered her spells to inhibit the labour I'd started.
I kept on pushing and pushing as, crazy with pain, I called down
futile curses on Jove for his failure to help me. I simply
wanted to die; my complaints would have softened the hardest of rocks.
As I moaned, the married women of Thebes who were there to support me
offered their vows to the gods for my safety and tried to encourage me.
One of my servants, Galánthis, a fair-haired girl from a humble
home, who always performed her tasks with a will and whose loyal
support had endeared her to me, now realized that cruel Juno
was up to some mischief; and while this lass kept coming and going
in and out of the doors, she noticed Lucina enthroned
on the altar, clasping her knees with her arms and interlocked fingers.
"Whoever you are," she said, "do go and congratulate Mistress.
Alcmena of Argos is safely delivered; she's now a mother,
and all her prayers have been answered." At once the goddess of childbirth
leapt to her feet and unlocked her hands in a panic. My bonds
were released and the baby arrived. They say that after she'd cheated

Lucina, Galanthis burst into laughter. At this she was savagely
grabbed by the goddess and dragged by her hair to the ground. As she struggled
to lift herself up, she was held till her arms were transformed into forefeet.
She stayed as busy as ever. Her back lost none of its human
colour, although she had now acquired the form of a weasel.
Because by her lying lips she'd assisted Alcmena in labour,
she breeds her young through her mouth* and haunts my house as she used to.'

DRYOPE

Alcmena sighed as she ended, distressed to remember the servant
who'd served her so well. Then her grandson's wife, fair Iole, spoke to her:
'Mother, you grieve for the change to Galanthis' form, but she never
was one of our family. Now let me tell you the curious fate
of my very own sister – although my tears of sorrow constrain me
and almost prevent my speaking. She was an only child
(as I had a different mother) and known as the loveliest girl
in Oechalia – Drýope. Long in the past she'd been raped by Apollo,
the god of Delos and Delphi. Although she wasn't a virgin,
Andraémon made her his wife and the match was considered a good one.
Picture a lake with sloping banks like the shore of the ocean,
ringed by a circle of myrtle trees. Here Dryope came,

unaware of her destined fate and hoping – this makes the story
even more dreadful – to gather some flowers for a wreath to the nymphs.
In her arms she was holding her special treasure, a baby boy,
not yet a year old, and feeding him milk from her soft, warm breast.
Not far from the watery pool was growing the plant of a lotus,*
bedecked with blossom of Tyrian purple in promise of berries.
Dryope plucked a few flowers to show to her baby and give him
pleasure. I thought (as I was there too) that I'd do the same,
when I suddenly saw that blood was dripping down from the stems
of the flowers and the branches were all astir with a tremulous shudder.
It is only now that the story is told, too late, by the peasants,
how Lotis the nymph, when fleeing Priápus' disgusting attentions,
altered her features, while keeping her name, to those of a lotus.
My sister, to whom this tale was unknown, was thoroughly startled;
she tried to step back and, after invoking the nymphs, to depart.
But her feet were rooted fast to the ground. She struggled to get free,
but found she could only move from her waist, as a coating of pliant
bark crept up from below and gradually sheathed her loins.
She at once attempted to tear her hair in a ritual gesture;

but the hand that she raised was filled with the leaves which had grown on her head.
The baby Amphíssus (the name he'd received from his grandfather Eúrytus)
felt the teat on his mother's breast going hard and stiff,
and the milk wouldn't come when he sucked. I stood there, watching my sister's
desperate plight, but unable to help – though I did my best
to delay the growth of the trunk and branches by clasping her tight
in my arms and wishing, I own, that the bark would envelop me too.
'Enter her husband Andraemon and poor old father Eurytus,
searching for Dryope. "Where is your sister?" they asked. I directed
their eyes to the lotus tree. Its wood was still warm and they fell
to their knees to kiss it and clung to the roots of their darling tree.
Already my dearest sister was nothing but tree, except
for her face. Her tears rained down on the leaves new-formed from her body,
and while her lips were there to allow her voice any outlet,
the words of her sad lament were wafted into the air:
'If the oaths of the cursed can ever be trusted, I swear by the gods
that I never deserved this wrong. How cruel to be punished for nothing!
My life has been guiltless. If that is not true, I pray I may wither
and lose every leaf that I have and be chopped by the axe for the bonfire.
Now take my tiny baby out of his mother's branches
to rest in the arms of a nurse. Please see that this place here, under
my tree, is where he enjoys his milk and comes for his playtime.

Then, when he's able to talk, please see that he greets his mother
and wistfully says, 'My mother is hiding inside this tree-trunk.'
And please make sure that he's frightened of pools, that he never picks blossom,
and thinks any shrub that he sees is the precious abode of a goddess.
Farewell, my beloved husband, my father, and you, dear sister.
If I have any claim on your love, look after me carefully;
defend my leaves from the slashing billhook and nibbling sheep.
And since I am able no longer to lower my body towards you,
reach up to me here, come close to my lips while they still can be touched;
and lift my darling baby again for a kiss from his mother.
Now I can say no more. The bark's soft growth is already
stealing over my milk-white neck and my head's disappearing
inside the top of the tree. You may keep your hands from my eyes;
the coating of bark will cover and close them without your help.'"*
She breathed her last in her final words. Though Dryope's body
was changed, its warmth persisted for long in the fresh-grown branches.'

IOLAÜS AND CALLIRHOË'S SONS

This curious story was hardly ended, its teller still weeping;
Alcmena was tenderly wiping the tears from Iole's cheeks
and weeping no less herself, when the sadness they felt was completely
dispelled by a strange arrival. For there in the lofty doorway
a young man stood, who was hardly more than a smooth-cheeked boy –
Ioláüs, with all his features restored to their youthful prime.
This gift had been granted by Hebe, the goddess of youth, in response
to her husband Hercules' prayers.* She had been on the point of swearing
she'd never accord such a boon to anyone else in the future,
when Themis prevented her, saying: 'Thebes is embroiled at this moment
in civil strife.* Bold Cápaneus cannot be beaten, except
by Jupiter's lightning. Two brothers will settle their quarrel by killing
each other. A prophet, still living, shall see his own ghost, as he's swallowed
up by the earth into Hades. His son,* in a crime that is also
a duty, shall dare to avenge his father by killing his mother.
Alcmaeon, shocked by his sin into madness and forced into exile,
will then be pursued by his mother's ghost and the dog-faced Furies,
until his new wife insists he obtain her the curse-ridden golden
necklace and Phégeus' sword has drained the blood of his kinsman.
So then Callírhoë, falling at mighty Jupiter's feet,
will ask him to add the years Iolaüs has lost to the age

of her infant sons, so that they can avenge the death of
their father.
Hebe's gift of the prime of life shall thus be advanced
through Jove's intervention, and children be turned
into full-grown men.'

MILETUS

When Themis who knows the future had uttered this
stream of prophetic
wisdom, the gods indulged in a series of noisy protests.
'Why can't a similar boon be granted to others?' they
grumbled.
Auróra complained that the years of her husband
Tithónus were sadly
prolonged, while beautiful Céres bewailed her Iásion's
white hairs.
Vulcan maintained that his son Erichthónius ought to
be fully
rejuvenated, while Venus, with half an eye to the
future,*
was ready to offer a deal for renewal of youth in
Anchíses.
Each of the gods had their favoured candidate. Rowdy
dissension
grew amid all the competing claims, till Jupiter finally
opened his mouth. 'Have you any respect for *me*?' he
thundered.
'Where will this end? Does anyone think they can
really defy
the decrees of Fate? It was Fate that allowed Iolaüs'
return
to the years of his youth. It is only by Fate that
Callirhoë's children
will shoot to their prime, not a matter for canvassing
votes or for fighting.

You all are subject to Fate, and – if this makes your subjection
more easy to bear – so am I. If I had the power to change things,
I'd favour my own sons: Aéacus' back would not be so bent
in his years of decline; Rhadamánthus would cull the flower of perpetual
youth; and so would Minos,* who now is despised for the bitter
weight of his crabbed old age and has lost his kingly authority.'
Jupiter's speech won over the gods; and none of them, seeing
Aeacus, Minos and old Rhadamanthus weak and exhausted,
felt justified in complaining. When Minos was still in his prime,
his very name was enough to strike terror in mighty nations;
but now enfeebled, he lived in fear of Deïone's son,
the proud Milétus, a sturdy young man whom Apollo had fathered.
Though Minos believed that the youth was plotting an insurrection,
he hadn't the face to drive him out of his house and home.
Miletus fled of his own accord, got hold of a fast-sailing
vessel and crossed the Aegean, until he landed in Asia
and built the walls of the famous town* named after its founder.
Here he encountered Cyáneë, child of the winding Maeánder,
wandering round the bends of her father's stream. The result
of their union was Byblis and Caunus, twins of astonishing beauty.

BYBLIS

Byblis' fate is a warning against prohibited love.
Byblis was seized by desire for Apollo's grandson, her brother;
she loved him not as she ought to have done, with a sister's affection.
At first she did not understand the growing passion inside her.
She saw nothing wrong in kissing him on the lips rather often,
or tenderly throwing her arms round Caunus' neck to caress it.
For long she deluded herself this feeling was perfectly natural;
but natural affection was slowly subverted. To visit her brother
she'd dress herself up and was over-keen to display her charms;
she was jealous of anyone else who was more attractive than she was.
The truth hadn't dawned on her yet, however. Her passion inspired
no prayers to the gods – but the fire was raging inside her heart.
No longer was Caunus her brother – she hated the name – but 'my master';*
she wished he'd address her as Byblis and not keep calling her 'sister'.
Still, in her waking moments, she wouldn't allow incestuous
thoughts to invade her mind. But when she was peacefully resting,
a vision of love would appear. She even dreamed that her brother
and she were one flesh; although she was lying asleep, she blushed.

When she woke, she lay quiet for a while, as she tried to recapture the picture
she'd seen in her dream; then, torn by conflicting emotions, she cried out:
'How wretched I am! What on earth can it mean, this dream in the night?
No, no, it mustn't come true! – But why am I having these dreams?
He's beautiful! Even his worst detractors would have to say so.
I like him, and I could love him, if only he weren't my brother;
and he would be worthy to have me. But sadly, I am his sister. –
So long as I never attempt to commit such a sin in the daytime,
it doesn't matter how often it happens at night in my dreams.
No one can witness a dream, and dreams give a kind of mock pleasure.
O Venus, O Cupid, winged god who attends on your mother so tender,
what great joy you have brought me! How vivid the passion that thrilled
my body! What pure satisfaction I felt in the depths of my being!
The memory brings it back! But the pleasure was all too brief;
the night hurried past so quickly and grudged me the rest of my joy.
'Oh Caunus, if I were permitted to change my name as your sister
and be your wife, how good a daughter I'd be to your father!
What's more, dear Caunus, how good a son you would be to mine!
If the gods would allow it, there's nothing we shouldn't be sharing in common,

except for our blood – though I'd wish you were nobler
born than myself!
Well, beautiful youth, some woman or other will bear
you a child,
while I who've been cruelly allotted the selfsame parents
as you
am merely your sister, and all that we share is the bar
that divides us.
So what is the meaning behind my dreams? But what's in
a dream!
Can it have any substance? – Yet even a dream can
come true, perhaps.
May the gods forbid it! – But gods have certainly slept
with their sisters.
Saturn was married to Ops, whose blood was the same
as his own;
Ocean and Tethys are husband and wife, like Juno and
Jove. –
But the gods have rules of their own. It is idle to
measure our human
codes and customs against the different conventions of
heaven.
No, I must either expel this forbidden desire from my
heart,
or else, if I cannot, I pray for death before I give way,
and so to be laid on my funeral pyre, where my brother
can finally
kiss my lips. Yet kisses require two lovers' agreement:
I may be willing, but *he* will judge it a hideous crime.
'But Aéolus' sons weren't frightened of going to bed
with their sisters* –
but how do I know about them? And why do I quote
this example?
Where am I rushing? Away, away, you incestuous
longings!
Don't force me to love my brother, except as a sister
should! –

If Caunus himself, however, had fallen in love with me first,
if *he* were burning with passion, perhaps I could gladly surrender.
In that case, Byblis, if you would never reject his advances,
woo him yourself! Will I manage to speak and confess that I love him?
Yes, your love will compel you to do it! If shame makes you tongue-tied,
your hidden feelings can be revealed in a secret letter.'
Thus she decided and thus she resolved her conflicting emotions.
Leaning up on her side and resting her arm on her elbow,
'Now I'll show him!' she said. 'I'll confess that I love him to madness. –
Heavens! Where am I drifting? The fire is consuming my heart!'
With trembling fingers she scratched the words she had formed in her mind,
her right hand guiding the pen and her left controlling the tablet.
She'd start and she'd stop; she'd write on the wax, then curse what she'd written;
inscribing and then deleting, emending, rejecting, approving;
alternately putting the tablets down and picking them up.
She just didn't know what she wanted. Whatever she thought she would do,
she at once was averse to. Her face was a mixture of shame and defiance.
She started her message, 'Your sister . . .', but quickly decided against it.
Smoothing it out, she scored the following words on the tablet:
'Your lover wishes you well; and unless you respond to her greeting,
she'll never be well in herself. She's ashamed, so ashamed to give you

her name; but if you would know my desire, I wish I could argue
my cause without disclosing my name till my prayers are answered,
my hopes are fulfilled, and you acknowledge and call me – your Byblis.
'You might indeed have guessed for yourself how wounded my heart is.
My pale, lean cheeks and my sad expression, the eyes that so often
are filled with tears, the sighs that I utter for no clear reason –
they all could have told you. Perhaps you remember my frequent embraces
and noticed the kisses I gave you were scarcely those of a sister.
But all I could do I did. Though grievously wounded by love,
though the fire of passion was raging inside me, I tried so hard –
the gods will bear witness – I tried at last to come to my senses.
I fought so long, poor girl that I was, to escape from the deadly
arrows of Cupid. The pain I bore was greater than any
you'd think that a girl could endure. But now I'm defeated and forced
to confess that I love you. In fear and trembling I beg you to help me.
You have the power to save or destroy the one who adores you.
Decide which choice you will make. This isn't the prayer of a foe,
but of one, though she couldn't be closer, who asks to be closer yet,
who asks to be bonded to you by chains which will fully unite us.

Rules are for prudish old men. Leave *them* to explore what's permitted,
to define what's right and what's wrong, and observe nice legal distinctions.
Young people in love can afford to be flexible, even foolish.
We still don't know what acts are allowed. We take it that nothing
is barred, and in this we follow the heavenly gods' example.
We are not to be stopped by a stern old father, by solemn
regard for our name or by fear; if we have any reason to fear,
we can hide our dalliance under our cover as brother and sister.
There's nothing to stop my holding a conversation in private
with *you*. We already embrace and kiss each other in public.
What more do we need? Oh, pity the one who confesses her passion
and wouldn't confess it unless she were forced by a love so extreme.
Don't let your name be carved on my grave as the cause of my death!'
The tablet was full when she'd traced these futile words in the wax,
so full indeed that the final line was scrawled in the margin.
At once she sealed the proof of her guilt with a precious stone,
which she dampened with tears as her tongue was too dry to provide any moisture.
Finally, blushing with shame, she called to one of her servants
and nervously flattered him, saying: 'My friend, I know I can trust you.
Please carry this letter to' – after a pause she added, 'my brother.'

Just as she gave him the tablets to take, they slipped from her hands
to the ground. Though the omen perturbed her, the letter was sent; and the servant
found a suitable time to deliver the secret inside it.

Young Caunus was simply appalled and had only read part of the message
before he suddenly flushed with anger and threw the thing down.
Then scarcely refraining from striking the terrified servant's face,
he shouted, 'Get out while you can, you vile incestuous pander!
You'd pay with your life, if your murder wouldn't disgrace my name.'
The poor wretch took to his heels and reported this savage reply
to his mistress. Byblis paled when she learned of her cruel rejection
and trembled in fear as an icy chill swept over her body.
But once her senses returned, her passion was kindled anew,
and soon the air was echoing round with her furious outburst:
'I've brought it upon myself! Oh, why was I such a fool
as to show how deeply I loved him? Why, when I ought to have hidden
my wicked desires, did I make such haste to commit them to writing?
I ought to have sounded his feelings out beforehand, by carefully
dropping mysterious hints. I ought to have taken note
of the wind by reefing my sails, and made sure it was blowing behind me.
My voyage would then have been perfectly safe and have brought me home,

when now I have spread my canvas to winds that I left
untested.
The storm is sweeping me on to the rocks! My ship has
capsized!
I am sinking into the ocean depths and there's no way back!
'What is more, clear omens warned me against indulging
my love
at the time when I ordered my servant to take the letter. The
tablets
were dashed to the ground and showed that my hopes
would also be dashed.
I surely ought to have changed the day or the whole of my
plan –
or rather merely the day. The god himself was at work;
his signs were only too plain, if I'd not been utterly crazy.
No, my mistake was to write that letter. I ought to have
spoken
to Caunus in person, declared to his face how much I
adored him.
He then would have seen my love in my tears and my
pleading eyes.
I might have expressed much more than those wretched
tablets had room for.
I might have thrown my arms round his neck as he backed
away;
and if he had sent me packing, I might have pretended to be
at death's door and begged for my life on my knees, hands
clasping his feet.
If any appeals could have softened his heart, they would
have been tried;
and if each entreaty had failed, they might have succeeded
together.
It may be the case that the servant I sent was in some way at
fault.
He can't have approached him correctly or chosen a
suitable moment;
he failed to wait for a time when Caunus was free to take
notice.

'These errors have harmed me. But Caunus isn't the son of a tigress;
his heart isn't made of unyielding rock or intractable iron,
compounded of adamant; nor did he suck at a lioness' teats.
He'll yield! I must woo him again. So long as I've breath in my body,
I'll keep on trying to bring my pursuit to a happy conclusion.
If what I have done could be cancelled, best not to have spoken to start with;
but failing that, I must go on fighting until I have won.
Supposing I now abandon the struggle, my Caunus will never
be able to put my audacious attempt quite out of his mind.
He'll imagine, because I have given up, that I never was serious,
or else I was testing him out and doing my best to entrap him.
He'll certainly think me the victim of common desire, and not
of the god who is burning and breaking my heart with the power of his full strength.
Finally, I have committed a wrong which I cannot undo.
I've written my letter and asked for his love; my intention's exposed.
If I venture no more, my reputation's already tarnished;
there's little to lose by further appeals, but much to be gained.'
Thus she reasoned; and such was the war in her wavering heart
that she wanted and hated to make the approach. But reason lost out

in the end, and the poor girl suffered the pain of repeated rejections.
When Byblis' pursuit was ended, her Caunus fled from the country,
as well as from incest, and built a new city* on foreign soil.

It was then, they say, that Miletus' daughter was driven by sorrow
completely out of her mind. It was then that she tore her garments
away from her breast and pummelled her arms in her frenzied grief.
Her madness was now for the world to see, as she freely admitted
her criminal passion by leaving her native land and the family
home she detested, to follow after her fugitive brother.
Just as the Thracian maenads, aroused by the thyrsus of Bacchus,
return again to their third-year rites when the time comes round,
so Byblis was seen by the brides of Bubássus, raving and screaming
through all the breadth of their country. Her travels took her through Caria,
home of the warrior Léleges, thence into Lycia's pastures.
Soon she had passed by Cragus* and Límyre, crossed the waters
of Xanthus and come to the ridge of Chimaéra,* the monster with fire
in its belly, the breast and head of a lion and the tail of a serpent.
When Byblis emerged at the edge of the forest, too tired to pursue
any more, she at last collapsed on the hard earth, hair dishevelled,

and lay with her face pressed down on a pillow of fallen leaves.
The Carian nymphs* repeatedly tried to support her limbs
in their gentle arms and suggest how her lovesick heart could be cured.
But her ears were deaf to all consolation. She lay unspeaking,
her nails digging into the grass as she watered the earth with her tears.
They say that the naiads supplied these tears with an underground stream
which could never dry up – the greatest tribute they could have accorded.
At once, like resin-drops dotting the bark of a new-cut pine,
or bitumen stickily oozing out of the oil-rich earth,
or ice which melts in the sun when the spring returns with the balmy
breath of the mild west wind; so Byblis, Apollo's grandchild,
melted away in her weeping and changed to a mountain spring,
which even today is known in the valley as Byblis' spring
and steadily trickles out by the foot of a dark-leaved ilex.

IPHIS

The story of Byblis' miraculous change would perhaps have spread
through the hundred cities of Crete,* if the island had not been faced
with a recent surprise near home in the transformation of Iphis.

Long ages ago, in the region of Phaestos, not far from the kingdom
of Cnossos, there lived a little-known man with the name of Ligdus,
a free-born person though one of the people, with wealth no greater
than might be presumed from his humble birth, but thoroughly honest
and well respected by all. When his wife was expecting a baby
and coming close to the time of the birth, he gave her a warning:
'My prayers are two: they are first that your labour will prove as easy
as possible; second, I hope you will bear me a boy, or else
I'll be faced with a burden beyond my means. So if by chance
(pray god it won't happen!) your child is a girl – though I say it reluctantly,
asking forgiveness for such an unfatherly thought – you must kill her.'
After he'd spoken, the tears poured down the cheeks of them both,
the husband who'd given the order no less than the wife who'd received it.
Despite his command, Telethúsa persistently begged her husband
not to restrict her hopes to a boy, but her prayers were useless.
Ligdus' mind was firmly made up. At last, when the woman
could hardly endure the weight of the growing child in her body,
one night, in the depths of her sleep, she dreamed that Isis* (once Io,
Ínachus' daughter) was standing in front of her bed, attended

by all of her sacred train. The brow of the goddess was decked
with horns like a crescent moon, her garland of golden corn-spikes
and royal insignia. Close to her side were dog-headed Anúbis,
divine Bubástis, Apis the bull with his dappled hide,
the child-god* asking for silence with finger pressed to his lips;
Osíris,* the search for whom is never abandoned; the timbrels
and snake from Egypt* whose neck is puffed with sleep-giving venom.
All these were so clear to the dreamer (she might have been fully awake),
when the goddess addressed her thus: 'Telethusa, my faithful worshipper,
banish your heavy cares and defy your husband's instructions.
After your child is at last delivered, you mustn't be frightened
to rear whatever is born. Yes, I am the goddess of Help
and respond to appeals for my aid. You'll never complain that your worship
of Isis was unrewarded.' So speaking, she passed from the chamber.
The Cretan woman then rose from her bed and, lifting her innocent
hands to the stars, she humbly prayed for her dream to come true.
Telethusa went into labour. Her baby was quickly delivered
and entered the world – as a girl, though the truth was withheld from her father.
The mother enjoined her people to take good care of her boy;
the pretence was accepted and only the nurse was let into the secret.

Ligdus fulfilled his vows to the gods and called the child Iphis,
his grandfather's name. This pleased Telethusa because it was common
to either sex and meant she could use it without deceit.
So the falsehood, inspired by her motherly instinct, went undetected.
The child was always dressed as a boy; and whether you'd think
of a girl or a boy, her form and features were lovely to look at.

Thirteen years had gone by when Iphis' father arranged
a marriage between his 'son' and a fair-haired girl called Iánthe.
This girl was the daughter of Cretan Teléstus and famed for her beautiful
looks – a dowry indeed – among the maidens of Phaestos.
Equal in age as well as in beauty, the two young children
received their earliest lessons in school from the selfsame teachers;
hence their falling in love with each other. Their innocent hearts
were aglow with a similar fire, but their expectations were different.
Ianthe looked forward with joy to the wedding night they'd agreed on
and thought that the lover she took for a man was her man to be;
but Iphis loved without hope of ever enjoying her loved one,
which made her passion the stronger – a girl in love with a girl!
Almost in tears, she sighed: 'Oh, what will become of me now?
I'm possessed by a love that no one has heard of, a new kind of passion,
a monstrous desire! If heaven had truly wanted to spare me,

it ought to have done so. If not, and the gods were out to destroy me,
they might at least have sent me some natural, normal affliction.
Cows never burn with desire for cows, nor mares for mares;
ewes are attracted to rams and every stag has his hind;
the same with the mating of birds. Throughout the animal kingdom
the female is never smitten with passionate love for a female.
I wish I had never been born a woman, I wish I were dead!
But Crete is the land of every perversion. Pasíphaë* lusted
after a bull – but her love was a male. My passion is wilder
than that, if the truth be told. Pasiphaë, though, could hope
for her lust to be satisfied. Daédalus built her the wooden cow*
and by this trick she enjoyed her bull. She at least had a lover
to cheat into taking her. Even if all the skill in the world
could be mustered here, if Daedalus ever returned to Crete
on his waxen wings, what on earth could he do? Could he use his arts
to transform a girl like me to a boy? Could he change Ianthe?
'Iphis, you must be brave, now, and take control of your feelings.
Shake off this reckless and foolish passion! Remember what sex
you belong to, unless you can cheat yourself with your own deception.

Aim to achieve what is right and love as a woman is
bound to.
Love cannot be born, it cannot be nourished without some
hope;
but *your* situation is hopeless. You're not kept off from your
lover's
embraces by guards, the watchful eye of a jealous spouse,
or a troublesome father; she doesn't herself reject your
advances.
But still you can never come to possess her. Whatever may
happen,
for all the efforts of gods or of men, you cannot be happy.
So far, to be sure, not one of my prayers has been refused;
the gods have been kind and have granted me all that they
possibly could;
my wishes are backed by my father, Ianthe herself, and
Ianthe's
father. It's Nature alone, more powerful than all, who
opposes
the match and is out to destroy me. Look, the day that I
long for,
my wedding-day, is approaching. Ianthe will soon be my
wife,
but not be my own. Surrounded by water, we'll die of
thirst.
O Juno, goddess of marriage, O Hymen! Why are you
gracing
a wedding between two brides, where the groom has failed
to appear?'
With that, her complainings ceased. Ianthe's emotions
were also
in violent turmoil. She prayed to Hymen to speed his
arrival.
Her longing was matched by the fear which troubled the
mother of Iphis,
who kept postponing the marriage and playing for time by
pretending

illness or pleading omens and dreams. But soon her fictitious
excuses were all used up. The moment for lighting the torches
was almost upon them and only a day remained. So then
Telethusa removed the fillets encircling her own and her daughter's
heads, and with hair flowing free she clung to the altar of Isis:
'Goddess who haunts Paraetónium, Lake Mareótis and Pharos,
who dwells on the Nile which divides itself into seven branches.
Help us, we pray you,' she cried, 'and allay the fear in our hearts.
It was you that I saw long ago in my dream, with your well-known emblems,
and recognized all – your attendant train and the jingling beat
of your tambourines. It was your commands that I stored in my memory,
yours the counsel and yours the gift which allowed my child
to survive and me to escape from my husband's anger. Oh pity
us both and grant us your help!' Telethusa wept as she ended.
The altar of Isis stirred – apparently moved by the goddess.
The doors of the temple trembled, the moonlike horns of the statue
shimmered with light and the sound was heard of the rattling timbrel.
Still anxious, but heartened at least by such a propitious omen,
the mother then left the temple; and Iphis followed behind her –

with longer strides than she normally took. Her girlish complexion
had lost its whiteness, her limbs grew stronger, and even her features
sharpened. Her bandless hair seemed cut to a shorter length.
She felt a new vigour* she'd never enjoyed as the female she'd been
till a moment before. That female was now transformed to a male!
Telethusa and Iphis, bring your gifts* to the temples in fearless,
confident joy! So the two of them brought their gifts to the temples,
and added a brief inscription, a plaque containing this one verse:

OFFERINGS IPHIS PLEDGED AS A GIRL AND PAID AS A BOY.

Dawn broke on the following day and the world was flooded with sunshine.
Venus, Juno and Hymen assembled close to the nuptial
torches, and Iphis the boy then won his beloved Ianthe.

BOOK 10

Iphis' happy wedding contrasts with the ill-omened nuptials of *Orpheus and Eurydice* (1–85). Ovid tells this famous story very much in his own playful way. He clearly wanted to do it differently from Virgil's beautiful treatment in *Georgics* 4, and his naughtier touches are at odds with the pathos of Orpheus' second loss of his wife on his return from the underworld. The last three lines, rather unexpectedly, introduce the theme of male homosexuality, which is developed later in the book.

Orpheus' power to draw trees behind him motivates the catalogue of trees (86–105) and so the story of *Cyparissus* (106–42), the favourite of Apollo, transformed to a cypress tree in grief for the pet stag which the boy has inadvertently killed with his spear. The rest of the book purports to be a song recital by Orpheus on the themes of boys (like Cyparissus) 'whom the gods have loved' and girls (like Byblis) 'inspired to a frenzy of lawless passion'. Some of the stories which follow, but not all, fit into this programme; and we quickly forget about Orpheus himself.

We are first very briefly told of the rape of the Trojan *Ganymede* (155–61) by Jupiter in the form of an eagle, but pass on more substantially to *Hyacinthus* (162–219), a boy from Sparta and another favourite of Apollo, who is killed by the god himself in an accident with a discus. The scene then changes to Cyprus, where Orpheus' themes are abandoned for the next two episodes. The *Cerastae and Propoetides* (220–43a) provide us with two short metamorphoses connected with Cyprus, the second because it suited Ovid to work in some reference to the renowned temple prostitutes. The theme also provides him with

a good lead into *Pygmalion* (243b–97), one of the highspots of the whole poem, not to be spoilt for the reader in advance. Suffice it to note that the fate of the Propoetides, whose cold hard hearts turn them to granite, is beautifully reversed in the metamorphosis of the ivory statue into warm soft flesh.

Myrrha (298–502) is the centrepiece of Book 10 and returns us to the incest-motif established by Byblis in Book 9. This time the girl is passionately in love with her father and incest actually takes place. Ovid prefaces the tale with a melodramatic flourish of aversion; but he still persuades us to sympathize with his heroine in the long soliloquy in which she debates her predicament, torn between passion and self-disgust. We identify further with Myrrha in the dramatic scene with the Nurse (inspired, no doubt, by Euripides' *Hippolytus*) and in the atmospheric build-up to the fatal union. As with Byblis, metamorphosis brings a measure of comfort to the tragic conclusion.

The final item in Orpheus' recital is *Venus and Adonis* (503–59, 708–38), with the longer *Atalanta and Hippomenes* (560–707) rather artificially inset. Adonis is Myrrha's baby grown to manhood and followed around by Venus, whose change of life-style mirrors that of Apollo pursuing Hyacinthus earlier in the book and may lead us to anticipate a similarly disastrous conclusion. The story of the chaste Atalanta's race and of how Hippomenes beat her with the help of Venus is very excitingly told, though the aftermath hardly fits the setting. Atalanta has been warned by an oracle to 'avoid all knowledge of men'; but in letting Hippomenes take her she seems more a victim of circumstances than a wicked sinner like Myrrha.

ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE

Hymen, the god of the marriage feast, in his robes of saffron,
flew from Crete through the measureless sky to the land of the Thracian
Cícones. Órpheus was calling the god to his wedding, though all
to no purpose. The god attended, for sure; but the ritual words,
the joyful faces and omens of favour were sadly missing.
Even the torch in his hand kept sputtering smoke, brought tears
to the eyes but never ignited, however strongly he waved it.
The outcome was even worse than foreshadowed: the newly-wed bride,
while taking a stroll through the grass with her band of attendant naiads,
suddenly fell down dead with the fangs of a snake in her ankle.
When Orpheus, the Thracian bard, had indulged his grief to the full
in the air above, he felt he must also appeal to the shades,
and dared to descend to the river Styx through the Taénaran gateway.*
Making his way through the shadowy tribes and the ghosts of the buried,
he came to Prosérpina, throned beside the Lord of the Shadows
who rules that dismal domain; and plucking the strings of his lyre,
he began: 'You powers divine of the subterranean kingdom,

where all of mortal creation must one day sink to our doom,
if you will give me permission to tell you the truth unvarnished
by shifty pretences, I've not come down to explore the murky
regions of Tártarus, nor to enchain the three-headed monster*
Medúsa bore, the dog whose coat is bristling with adders.
I'm here in search of my wife, cut off in the years of her youth
when a viper she trampled discharged its venom inside her ankle.
I'd hoped to be able to bear my loss and confess that I tried.
But Love was too strong. That god is well known in the world above,
and I wonder whether you know him here; I divine that you do.
If rumour has not invented the tale of that old abduction,*
you too are united by Love. In the name of these confines of fear,
in the name of this vast abyss and your realm of infinite silence,
I, Orpheus, implore you, unravel the web of my dear Eurýdice's
early passing. We all are destined for you. We may tarry
a little but, sooner or later, we speed to our one habitation.
This is the place that we all are bound for, our final dwelling,
and yours is the longest reign that the human race must endure.
Eurydice too, when her due of years has been ripely completed,
shall own your sway. Till then, I beg you to let me enjoy her.
If fate forbids you to show my wife any mercy, I'll never
return from Hades myself. You may joy in the deaths of us both.'

As Orpheus pleaded his cause, enhancing his words with his music,
he moved the bloodless spirits to tears. For a moment* Tántalus
ceased to clutch at the fleeting pool, Ixíon's wheel
was spellbound, the vultures halted their pecking at Tityos' liver,
the Dánaids dropped their urns and Sísyphus sat on his boulder.
The Furies' hearts were assuaged by the song, and the story goes
that they wept real tears for the very first time. The king and queen
of the world below forbore to refuse such a moving appeal,
and they summoned Eurydice. Leaving the rest of the ghosts who had newly
arrived, she slowly trailed along on her wounded ankle.
Orpheus was told he could lead her away, on one condition:
to walk in front and never look back until he had left
the Vale of Avérnus, or else the concession would count for nothing.
In deadly silence the two of them followed the upward slope;
the track was steep, it was dark and shrouded in thick black mist.
Not far to go now; the exit to earth and the light was ahead!
But Orpheus was frightened his love was falling behind; he was desperate
to see her. He turned, and at once she sank back into the dark.
She stretched out her arms to him, struggled to feel his hands on her own,
but all she was able to catch, poor soul, was the yielding air.

And now, as she died for the second time, she never complained
that her husband had failed her – what could she complain of, except that he'd loved her?
She only uttered her last 'farewell', so faintly he hardly
could hear it, and then she was swept once more to the land of the shadows.
Robbed of his wife all over again, poor Orpheus was stunned
like the terrified person* who once caught sight of the three-headed hell-hound,
Cerberus, chained by the middle neck, and whose fear never left him
until his nature had changed and the stone crept over his body;
or poor Lethaéa,* transformed to stone for her pride in her beauty,
whose husband Ólenus took her offence on himself and hoped
to be changed in her place – two hearts that once were united in love
and now are separate rocks on the snowy heights of Mount Ida.
Orpheus wanted to cross the Styx for a second time,
but his pleas were in vain and the ferryman pushed him away from the bank.
So he sat there in rags for a week, without eating a morsel of food;
his anguish, his grief and his tears were all that kept him alive.
Cursing the gods of the dark for their cruel unkindness, he finally
took himself back to Rhódope's heights and to windswept Haemus.*
Three years went by, with the sun god traversing watery Pisces*
to mark their ending. Orpheus now would have nothing to do

with the love of women, perhaps because of his fortune in love,
or he may have plighted his troth for ever. But scores of women
were burning to sleep with the bard and suffered the pain of rejection.
Orpheus even started the practice among the Thracian
tribes of turning for love to immature males and of plucking
the flower of a boy's brief spring before he has come to his manhood.

CYPARISSUS

Picture a hill and above the hill an expanse of plateau,
green with a carpet of grass, but totally lacking in shade.
Shade was provided when Orpheus, the heaven-born bard, sat down
and started to play on his lyre. Trees suddenly came on the scene:*
the oak of Dodóna,* a copse of poplars, the high-leaved durmast,*
lindens, the beech and the virgin laurel; the brittle hazel,
the ash that is made into spears, the knot-free fir and the ilex
bending under the weight of its acorns; the genial plane tree,
the maple of many colours, the willow that weeps by the river;
the waterside lotus, the evergreen box and the slender tamarisk;
myrtle with black and green berries and laurustinus* with blue.
Some of these trees were covered in creeping spirals of ivy;
vines came, either in tendrils or else supported on elms.

Then rowan, spruce and the arbutus laden with berries of red;
the flexible palm which serves for the victor's crown, and also
the pine with its long bare trunk and luxuriant top, the beloved
of Cýbele, mother of gods, since her favourite Attis* discarded
his masculine parts for this tree and hardened into its trunk.

Amongst this arboreal throng was, lastly, the cone-shaped cypress,
now a tree, but a boy in the past, and the darling of Phoebus
Apollo, the god who pulls on the bow-string and plays on the lyre-string.
This is the story. The boy Cyparíssus adored a stag
which was sacred to all the nymphs who haunt the Carthaéan plains,
a magnificent creature with spreading antlers that cast a shadow
above its head. The horns were brilliantly tipped in gold;
and over the shoulder, around the smooth round neck, they had hung
a collar studded with jewels. On its forehead there dangled a silver
amulet held by the lightest of thongs; while – no less fetchingly –
pendants of pearls gleamed down from its two ears next to the temples.
This fearless animal, utterly lacking in natural timidity,
visited people's houses, and even strangers were welcome
to stroke its neck. But the one who cherished it most of all
was young Cyparissus, the best-looking boy on the island of Ceos.
This lad would take the animal out to browse in new pastures

or drink from the clear, refreshing springs. He'd garland those antlers
with bright-coloured flowers, ride to and fro on its back like the proudest
horseman, and bridle the gentle muzzle with purple reins.
Sweltering heat at noon in the month of Cancer the Crab,*
whose claws were aglow on the shore in the burning rays of the sun.
Resting his weary limbs on the grassy earth, the stag
was quietly enjoying the cool beneath the shade of a tree,
when a sharp spear pierced him, unthinkingly thrown by the young Cyparissus.
Seeing the creature he loved was cruelly wounded and dying,
the boy was determined to die himself. Though Apollo consoled him
as far as he possibly could and implored him not to distress himself
overmuch, Cyparissus kept sobbing away and asked,
as a final gift from the gods, to mourn till the end of time.
He wept and he wailed till his blood drained out and the whole of his body
started to turn the colour of green. The hair that was hanging
over his creamy forehead was changed to a shaggy profusion,
which stiffened and rose to the starry sky in a slender point.
The god sighed deeply and sadly exclaimed: 'You'll be mourned by me,
you will mourn for others and always be there when they mourn for their loved ones.'*

ORPHEUS' SONG: INTRODUCTION

Such was the shady cluster of trees which Orpheus attracted,
sitting amidst a crowded assembly of birds and of beasts.
When he'd tested his strings with the touch of his thumb to
his own satisfaction,
and judged that the notes at their different pitches were
tuned to produce
harmonious chords, he burst into song in the following
strain:
'Let Jove be the start* of my song, Callíope – Muse and my
mother!
Jove holds sway over all. Jove's might I have often
proclaimed
of old, when in weightier vein I sang of the Títans' defeat
and the crash of victorious thunderbolts over the plain of
Phlegraéa.
Now there is call for a lighter note. Let my song be of boys
whom the gods have loved and of girls who have been
inspired to a frenzy
of lawless passion and paid the price for their lustful
desires.

ORPHEUS' SONG: GANYMEDE

'The king of the gods once fell in love with a Phrygian
youth
whose name was Gánymede. Jupiter found a form he
preferred
to his usual guise, the form of a bird – but no mere
fledgeling
would do for him! It must be able to carry his lightning.
He quickly beat the air on the borrowed wings of his eagle
and thus abducted the Trojan, who still, to Juno's
annoyance,
mixes Jupiter's nectar and serves the cup at his table.

ORPHEUS' SONG: HYACINTHUS

'Phoebus adored Hyacínthus, the son of Amýclas, and wanted
to raise him too to the skies; but sadly, fate intervened
too soon. In a way, however, the boy is immortal: when winter
is banished by spring and the Ram replaces the watery Fish,
the hyacinth flower appears and blooms in the fresh green grass.
My father Apollo admired Hyacinthus above all others.
Forsaking his shrine at Delphi, the navel of earth, he haunted
the unwalled city of Sparta, close to the river Eurótas.
His arrows and lyre were abandoned; his normal pursuits were forgotten.
He'd willingly carry his favourite's nets, hold on to his hounds,
or follow him over the rugged ridges of dangerous mountains.
His passion was fuelled by all the hours that they spent together.
One day, when the sun was about at its zenith, halfway between
the twilight of dawn and of dusk, the two of them stripped off their clothes
and anointed their bodies with gleaming oil, to compete with each other
in throwing the discus. Apollo went first; he poised the plate
and launched it into the sky, where it severed the clouds in its path.
A long time later the disc descended to solid earth,
revealing the skill no less than the physical strength of the thrower.

At once, unthinkingly,* carried away by his sporting zeal,
the Lacónian boy dashed forward to pick the plate up, but it landed
hard on the soil with tremendous force and then rebounded
straight in his beautiful face. The god went as deathly pale
as the lad himself and caught his arms as he fell to the ground.
To save the life of his friend, he desperately rubbed the body,
dabbed at the wound and applied his herbs; but all his medical
arts were in vain. His lover's injury couldn't be healed.
In a watered garden, if somebody breaks the stem of a violet,
poppy or lily with yellow stamens thick in its cup,
the flower will droop and suddenly lower its shrivelling head;
it can't stand up any more; it is gazing down on the earth:
so with the head of the dying youth. His disabled neck,
too weak to bear the weight it was carrying, sank to his shoulder.
'"Fading away, Hyacinthus! Cheated of youth's sweet bloom!"
lamented Apollo. "I see your wound, and I see my guilt.
You are my sorrow and you are my shame. You died by my hand,
and so shall your epitaph say. I, I am the cause of your death.
Yet how can it be my fault, unless to have played a game
or have fondly loved can be called a fault? How I wish I could die
in your place or beside you! But since we are subject to destiny's laws,
you can only survive in my heart, be recalled in the words of my lips.
Your name will resound in the music I play, in the songs that I sing.

My sighs shall be imaged in you and scored in the marks
on a new flower.*
Later, the time will come when Aias,* bravest of
heroes,
shall link his fate to this flower and his name be read on
your petals."
'And while Apollo was speaking these words with
prophetic lips,
the blood which had spilled from the wound to the
ground and darkened the green grass
suddenly ceased to be blood; and a flower brighter
than Tyrian
purple rose from the earth and took the form of a
lily –
except that its colour was deepest red,* where the lily
is silver.
That wasn't enough for the god who had wrought this
miraculous tribute:
the cries that had welled from his heart were engraved
on the flower, and AIAI,
those four letters of mourning and grief, could be read
in the petals.
Sparta was not ashamed of her son Hyacinthus. His
honour
endures to the present time; each year, by ancient
tradition,
the people process in the solemn festival called
Hyacinthia.

ORPHEUS' SONG: THE CERASTAE AND PROPOETIDES

'But if you happened to ask the people of metal-rich
Amathus
whether they took any pride in the women they called
Propoétides,

"No!" they would answer. They'd say the same of the men whose foreheads
were once disfigured by horns, and hence their name of Cerástae.
Before the doors of these people there stood an altar of Jupiter,
guardian of guests. If an innocent stranger observed this altar
covered in blood, he might have supposed that the sacrificed victims
were suckling calves or sheep which had grazed in the local meadows.
In fact, the victims were human guests. These horrible rites
affronted Venus, the mother of life and the goddess of Cyprus.
She thought of deserting her cities and island. But then she questioned:
"How have my cities offended? What's wrong with this beautiful island?
No, it's the fault of one impious family. *They* should be punished
by exile or death, or something between the two. What punishment
could this be – but metamorphósis?" And while she wondered
what new appearance to give them, she cast her eyes on their horns
and had an idea. "Good!" she said. "I can leave them those."
And so she reshaped their ogre-like frames into fierce young bulls.*

'But the lewd Propoetides went as far as asserting that Venus
wasn't a goddess at all. Because of the deity's anger,
it's said that they were the first to offer their bodies and beauty
for sale.* Then after these harlots had lost all shame, and the blood

no longer ran to their cheeks but congealed as hard as
their natures,
it didn't take much of a change to transform them to
solid granite.

ORPHEUS' SONG: PYGMALION

'These women's scandalous way of life was observed by
a sculptor,
Pygmálion. Sick of the vices with which the female sex
has been so richly endowed, he chose for a number of
years
to remain unmarried, without a partner to share his
bed.
In the course of time he successfully carved an
amazingly skilful
statue in ivory, white as snow, an image of perfect
feminine beauty – and fell in love with his own
creation.
This heavenly woman appeared to be real; you'd surely
suppose her
alive and ready to move, if modesty didn't preclude it;*
art was concealed by art to a rare degree. Pygmalion's
marvelling soul was inflamed with desire for a
semblance of body.
Again and again his hands moved over his work to
explore it.
Flesh or ivory? No, it couldn't be ivory now!
He kissed it and thought it was kissing him too. He
talked to it, held it,
imagined his fingers sinking into the limbs he was
touching,
frightened of bruising those pure white arms as he
gripped them tight.
He'd whisper sweet nothings or bring his idol the gifts
which give pleasure

to girls, such as shells from the shore, smooth pebbles or tiny birds,
flowers of a thousand colours, lilies and painted balls,
or tears of amber dropped from the trees. He even dressed it
in clothes, put rings on the fingers and necklaces round the throat,
hung jewels from the ears and girdled the breasts with elegant bands.
All these looked well – though the naked body was equally lovely.
He laid this down on a couch, well strewn with covers of Tyrian
purple, and called it his darling mistress; then lifted the resting
head on the soft white pillows, as though it could relish their comfort.
'Venus' festival now had arrived, and the whole of Cyprus
was making holiday. Heifers with gold on their spreading horns
had fallen, struck by the axe on their snow-white necks, and incense
was smoking. His offering laid, Pygmalion stood by the altar
and nervously asked: "You gods, all gifts are within your power.
Grant me to wed . . ." – not daring to say "my ivory maiden",
he used the words "a woman resembling my ivory maiden".
Golden Venus was present herself for her own celebration.
She understood what Pygmalion meant and she signalled her favour:
the fire on her altar, with shooting tongues, flared up three times.
As soon as the sculptor returned, he made for his loved one's statue,
and bending over the couch, he gave her a kiss. Was she warm?

He pressed his lips to hers once again; and then he started
to stroke her breasts. The ivory gradually lost its hardness,
softening, sinking, yielding beneath his sensitive fingers.
Imagine beeswax from Mount Hyméttus, softening under
the rays of the sun; imagine it moulded by human thumbs
into hundreds of different shapes, each touch contributing value.
Astonished, in doubtful joy, afraid that he might be deluded,
Pygmalion fondled that longed-for body again and again.
Yes, she was living flesh! He could feel the throb of her veins
as he gently stroked and explored. At last the hero of Paphos
opened his heart in a paean of thanks to Venus, and pressed
his lips to the lips of a woman. She felt his kisses, and blushed;
then timidly raised her eyes to the light and saw her lover
against the sky. The goddess graced the union she'd granted;
and soon, when the horns of the moon had grown nine times to their fullness,
a daughter was born called Paphos, who gives her name to the island.

ORPHEUS' SONG: MYRRHA

'Paphos gave birth to a son called Cinyras. If he'd been childless,
Cinyras might have been counted among the most blessèd of men.
It's a shocking story. Daughters and fathers, I strongly advise you
to shut your ears! Or, if you cannot resist my poems,
at least you mustn't believe this story or take it for fact.
If you do believe it, then also believe that the crime was punished.
If nature, however, allows such a crime to be perpetrated,
I have to congratulate this domain* on her distance from countries
where horrors as foul as this have been witnessed. The land of Panchaéa
may boast of her fabulous riches in balsam, cinnamon, spices,
frankincense sweated from trees, and her various scented flora,
so long as she keeps her myrrh to herself. That new-formed tree
was a worthless addition. Cupid himself denies that his arrows
were Myrrha's downfall and clears his torches of such an indictment.
One of the three dread Furies applied a Stygian firebrand
or filled her with viper's venom. To hate one's father is wickedly
wrong; but incestuous love is even more wicked than hatred.
'The maiden was courted on every side. From over the East
her suitors flocked to compete for her hand. Now, Myrrha, choose one,

choose one from them all for your husband, though *one*
must not be among them!
The girl was fully aware of her guilty passion and battled
against it. She said to herself: "Oh, where are these foul
thoughts leading me?
What am I trying to do? I pray to you, gods, by the
bonds
of family love and the sacred laws of parents and
children,
avert this terrible evil; resist the crime in my heart –
if this is indeed a crime. I wonder, for daughterly duty
cannot condemn this love. All other creatures can mate
as they choose for themselves. It isn't considered a
scandal for bulls
to mount the heifers they've sired or for stallions to
serve their own fillies;
goats may cover the young that they've spawned, and
even a bird
can conceive her chicks by a mate who happens to be
her father.
How lucky they are to do as they please! How
spitefully human
morality governs our lives! What nature freely allows
us,
the jealous law will refuse. And yet there are said to be
countries
where mothers can sleep with their sons and daughters
can sleep with their fathers,
and natural love is intensified by the double
attachment.
How sad that it wasn't my lot to be born in one of
those places!
I'm merely the victim of chance. – But why am I talking
like *this*?
Such thoughts are forbidden, I must dispel them! Of
course it's my duty
to love him, but just as a father. – And so, if I weren't
the daughter

of royal Cinyras, I should be able to share his bed.
But since he's already my own, he cannot be mine, and his very
closeness to me is my loss. I could hope for more as a stranger.
I'd willingly move away and abandon my homeland, if I could
escape from the taint of guilt. But my evil passion prevents me.
I need to be here to see his face, to touch him, to talk to him,
kiss his lips, if I'm not permitted to go any further. –
Further, undaughterly girl? Can you contemplate anything further?
Don't you see you're confusing all names and natural ties?
Will *you* play the role of your mother's supplanter and father's mistress?
Will *you* be known as your own son's sister and brother's mother?
Will you feel no fear of the Furies, those sisters with black snakes writhing
on top of their heads, who flourish their flaming brands in the eyes
and faces of guilty souls? No, Myrrha, so far your body
is free from the taint of sin. Do not sin in your mind; you must not
defile great Nature's unbreakable bonds with incestuous union.
Although you may wish it, it cannot be done. Your father is good
and knows what is right – how I wish that he felt a passion like mine!"

'So Myrrha debated. But Cinyras, wondering how he should deal
with such an abundance of qualified suitors, went to his daughter,
ran over their names and asked her whom she would choose for her husband.

At first she said nothing and merely gazed on her father's face,
her eyes suffused with her warm salt tears in her mental turmoil.
Interpreting these as a token of maidenly modesty, Cinyras
said, "Don't cry!" as he dried her cheeks and tenderly kissed her.
Ecstatic with joy at the kiss, the girl replied to his question
about the husband she wanted by saying, "A man like you."
Misunderstanding her meaning, her father warmly commended her,
"Dutiful child! Be always as good!" That mention of duty
awakened her guilty conscience and caused her to lower her eyes.
'It was deep midnight, when bodies and anxious minds are at rest.
But Cinyras' daughter was lying awake, tormented by passion
she couldn't control and the frantic longings that constantly haunted her.
Desperate now, then ready to dare, her shame in conflict
with wild desire, she could form no plan; and like an enormous
tree which is almost felled and awaiting the final stroke
of the axe (none knows which way it will fall, fear reigns all round it),
so Myrrha, assaulted and shaken by warring emotions, swayed
uncertainly this way and that, inclining in either direction,
unable to see any end or relief from her passion but death.

Death seemed to her best. She rose from her bed, determined to strangle
herself in a halter and tied her girdle around a crossbeam.
Then crying, "Farewell, dear Cinyras, now you can understand
why your daughter died!" she attached the noose to her pale white neck.

'The story continues that Myrrha's words were confusedly caught
by the loyal old nurse who still kept watch on her charge's threshold.
The woman got up, flung open the doors, caught sight of the girdle,
and screamed the moment she realized what Myrrha intended to do.
Then beating her breast and tearing her garments, she snatched the noose
from the suicide's neck and tore it apart. At last there was time
to burst into tears, to clasp the girl in her arms and to ask her,
"What does this halter mean?" But Myrrha said nothing and stood there
still as a statue, her eyes turned down to the ground in shame,
angry at being forestalled in her vain suicidal attempt.
The old woman insisted; unveiling her white hair, baring her flaccid
breasts, she implored the girl, by her crib and the milk she had sucked
as a baby, to share whatever was causing her pain. But Myrrha
turned away with a sigh. The nurse was firmly determined
to know the answer and promised her more than a trustworthy ear.
"Tell me," she said, "let me help you. I've still some energy left.

If it's passion, I know a woman who'll cure you by spells and herbs;
if you're under a curse, we can purify you with magical rites;
if the gods are angry, a sacrifice will appease their anger.
What else can I think is the trouble? Your family fortunes, at least,
are safely assured for the future. You still have your mother and father."
That last word, "father", provoked the girl to a deep, deep sigh;
but the nurse still hadn't the slightest inkling that Myrrha was fighting
unnatural desire, though she did suspect that she might be in love.
She refused to give up and implored the poor girl to confide her secret,
whatever it might be. Drawing her close to her aged bosom
and hugging her tight as she sobbed away in those frail old arms,
"I know what's the matter," she said, "you're in love. Your busy old Nursie
will help you once more, my darling. Don't worry, I shan't breathe a word
to your father." Myrrha broke free from her nurse's embrace in a fury,
buried her face in her pillows and shouted, "Just leave me alone
and spare my feelings of shame!" When the nurse persisted, she pleaded,
"Please leave me, or else stop asking me why I'm unhappy. The trouble
you're trying so keenly to probe is a crime!" The old nurse shuddered;
her hands were trembling as much with fear as with age, as she stretched out

her arms like a beggar and threw herself down at her darling's feet.
First she wheedled, then tried to scare her. "Come out with the truth,"
she said, "or I'll tell your father you tried to strangle yourself.
If you'll only admit to your love, I faithfully promise to help you."
Myrrha lifted her head and pressed her cheek, all streaming with tears, to her nurse's breast. She tried several times to confess,
but couldn't come out with the words. In her shame she covered her eyes
with her dress and exclaimed, "Oh mother, how lucky you are in your husband!"
Nothing but that, then a sigh. The nurse's body went cold;
a shudder ran through her bones as she tumbled at last to the truth;
and stiffly, roughly, her white hairs rose up over her scalp.
"Banish this hideous love, if you can!" she protested, and said
much more in the same vein. Myrrha knew the advice was right,
but remained determined to die, if she couldn't obtain what she wanted.
"All right," said the nurse, "you must live and shall have your . . ." – she stopped as she couldn't
say "father", although she called on the gods to witness her promise.

'Just then the married women were holding the annual rites
of dutiful Ceres, when dressed in garments as white as snow
they dedicate wreaths of golden corn, first-fruits of the harvest.
For nine nights, also, all acts of love and sexual contact
with men are counted taboo. King Cinyras' wife, Cenchréïs,

was one of the throng of women engaged in these holy mysteries.
So when the king was deprived for a time of his rightful partner,
that busybody, the nurse, got hold of him when he'd been drinking,
and told him about a beautiful girl who truly adored him,
though lying about her name. When asked the age of the girl,
"The same as Myrrha's," she answered, and then was ordered to fetch her.
As soon as she came back home, she announced, "My darling child,
you can now be happy, we've won!" Poor Myrrha's delight was not wholly
unmingled; her mind was too much troubled by gloomy forebodings.
But still she could feel some joy; her emotions were all in confusion.
'Midnight, the hour when silence reigns and Boötes the Ploughman
has tilted the shaft of the Wagon between the Bears at their zenith.
Myrrha set out on her guilty mission. The golden moon*
had fled from the sky, the stars were hiding and shrouded in black clouds.
Night was missing her fires: first, Ícarus covered his face,
then his daughter Erígone,* sanctified for her filial piety.
Three evil-omened stumbles warned the girl back, three hoots
of the deathly screech-owl chanting its sinister, mournful music.
She still went forward (the darkness of black night tempered her shame),

holding on to the nurse with her left hand, groping her way
through the gloom with her right. And now she stood on
the chamber threshold;
now she opened the door and was led inside. Her knees
were trembling and giving way, the blood had gone from
her cheeks
and all her courage had failed. The closer she came to her
criminal
goal, the more she shivered, the more she regretted her
boldness,
the more she wished she could turn and run before she was
recognized.
While she faltered, the crone took hold of her hand and
conducted her
up to the king's high bed; then letting her go with the
words,
"Cinyras, take her, she's yours," she united their two
doomed bodies.
The father welcomed his flesh and blood to that bed of
uncleanness,
gently calming her virginal fears with words of assurance.
Perhaps, because of her age, he even called her "my
daughter"
and she said "father", to put the finishing touch to their
incest.
'Filled with her father's unhallowed seed, she withdrew
from the chamber,
bearing the fruit of her monstrous crime in her impious
womb.
The act was repeated the following night and other nights
after.
Finally Cinyras, eager to know the mistress he'd taken
so many times in his arms, came in with a torch, which
allowed him
to see his daughter and what he had done. Speechless with
rage,
he reached for his gleaming sword in the scabbard that
hung close by him.

Myrrha took to her heels. The shadows of night and the darkness
mercifully saved her from death. Then roaming over the country,
she left Arabia, land of palms, and the fields of Panchaea.
Thence she wandered for nine long months, until she eventually
rested in Saba,* exhausted and scarcely able to carry
the weight in her womb. Unsure what to pray for, divided between
her terror of death and disgust for life, she united her thoughts
in the following plea: "You heavenly powers, if any there be,
whose ears are open to those who confess their vile wrong-doings,
I cannot deny that I richly deserve to be cruelly punished,
but hate to pollute the living by staying on earth, or the dead
by passing below. Debar me, I pray you, from either kingdom.
Refuse me life and refuse me death by changing my form."
'There *is* a power that responds to confession. At least, her final
prayer found gods of its own to fulfil it. While she was speaking,
the earth closed over her feet, and roots spread out to the sides
through the broken nails of her toes, to provide the base of a slender
trunk. Her bones became wood, and the marrow inside them survived
as her blood was turned into sap. Her arms were converted to branches,
her fingers to twigs, and her skin was hardened to form new bark.

By now the developing tree had encompassed her pregnant belly,
had sheathed her breasts and was on the point of hiding her neck.
But Myrrha could wait no longer and moved to meet the advancing
growth by sinking down and plunging her head in the bark.
Although the emotions she once had felt were lost with her body,
she still continues to weep and her warm tears drip from the new tree.
Even tears can have honour. The resin distilled from the bark
is given the name and fame of myrrh in lasting remembrance.

ORPHEUS' SONG: VENUS AND ADONIS (1)

'The baby, however, so wrongly conceived, had grown in the tree-trunk
and now was trying to find a way of leaving its mother
and issuing forth. Inside its prison the pregnant belly
swelled and stretched with its load. No cries attended the birth-pangs;
no voice was left to invoke Lucína in time of travail.
But still the tree resembled a woman in labour; bent double,
it groaned again and again and was drenched in a downpour of tears.
Gentle Lucina then took her place by the pain-wracked branches
and, laying her hands on them, chanted the spells that assist delivery.
Cracks appeared on the tree; the bark split open, and out
came a living baby, a wailing boy, whom the naiads at once

laid down on the soft green grass and anointed with myrrh from his mother.
A beautiful child! Even Envy would say so. He looked exactly
like one of the naked cupids you see in a picture, provided
you gave him a quiver or took theirs out to remove any difference.

'Time glides stealthily past in its fleeting passage, unnoticed;
nothing has greater speed than the years. The child, who was born
of his sister and sired by his grandfather, not long since had been hidden
inside a tree and had just emerged as a beautiful baby.
He soon was a youth, then a man, and now more handsome than ever,
enough to attract even Venus and so to avenge the passionate
love which had ruined Myrrha. What happened was this. While Cupid,
wearing his quiver over his shoulder, was giving his mother
a kiss, he unwittingly grazed her breast with the tip of an arrow.
The wounded goddess thrust him away; but the scratch went deeper
than showed on the surface and Venus herself didn't feel it to start with.
Later, entranced by our young man's beauty, she cared no more
for her usual haunts: the shore of Cythéra or sea-girt Paphos,
Cnidos, teeming with fish, and Amathus, wealthy in metals.
She even absented herself from the sky for the love of Adónis.

Him she clung to and constantly shadowed. The goddess who always
liked to pamper herself in the shade and who took great pains
to enhance her beauty, was roaming the mountain ridges and forests,
jumping the brambly rocks, with her dress drawn up to her knees
like Diana's, hallooing the hounds and chasing more harmless quarry:
the quick-footed hare, tall-antlered stag and the gentle deer.
But she kept her distance from fearless boars and avoided the ravening
wolf, the sharp-clawed bear and the lion that slaughters the cattle.
She counselled Adonis too – if counsel can make any difference –
to steer very clear of the wilder game: "Be brave when your quarry
is timid," she said. "It's dangerous to counter boldness with boldness.
Take no risks, dear lover, at my expense, or allow
yourself to provoke what is well provided with weapons by nature.
I would not wish your glory to cost me dear. Your youth,
your beauty and all that Venus adores will never discourage
the lions, the bristly boars or beasts with threatening eyes.
Boars carry the power of the lightning flash in their sharp-hooked tusks,
and tawny lions are hugely aggressive and angry creatures;
I hate and detest the whole breed!" When Adonis asked her the cause
of her hatred, she answered: "I'll tell you how I was deeply insulted
long years ago; the strange conclusion will surely amaze you.
But all this unwonted hunting has tired me out. Now look,

how convenient! Here's a delightful poplar to give us some shade,
with a couch of grass underneath. I'd like to rest with you here . . ."
and she lay on the ground to recline on the grass and recline on Adonis,
pressing her burning cheek to the naked breast of her lover;
then, interspersing her words with kisses, she started her story:

VENUS' STORY: ATALANTA AND HIPPOMENES

'"Perhaps you have heard of a girl who outstripped the fastest of men
in running. The rumour isn't a fiction; she really could beat them.
Moreover, you couldn't have said if her speed of foot or her beauty
was more prodigious. One day, when she went to consult the god
regarding a husband, the oracle answered: 'No need of a husband
for you, Atalánta.* Avoid all knowledge of men if you can.
But you shall not escape. You will lose yourself, without losing your life.'
Alarmed by the oracle's warning, she lived in the depths of the forest
unmarried, and fiercely repulsed the pressing throng of her suitors
by setting them terms. 'I cannot be won,' she explained, 'unless
I am first defeated in running. Compete with me in a foot-race.

The winner's reward shall be my hand and body in
marriage;
the loser's forfeit is death. These must be the rules of our
contest.'
Young Atalanta was ruthless; but such was the power of her
beauty
that all her impetuous suitors accepted her terms and
competed.
One of the crowd who came to watch this unequal race
was a youth, Hippómenes. While he was taking his seat, he
was thinking,
'How could anyone take such a risk in pursuit of a wife?'
And thus he dismissed the extravagant passion of all the
contenders.
But once he had seen Atalanta's face and her unclothed
body –
as lovely as mine or as yours, Adonis, if you were a
woman –
he gasped in wonder and, raising his arms, said, 'Kindly
forgive me,
all whom I blamed just now. The worth of the prize you
were seeking
had not yet entered my mind.' His heart caught fire as he
praised her.
In hoping that none of the others should win, his jealousy
made him
afraid that they might. Then he asked, 'Why shouldn't I try
my luck
in the contest? Fortune favours the brave!' As Hippomenes
carefully
weighed his chances, the girl passed by on her flying feet.
To the youth from Boeótia she seemed to be running as fast
as an arrow
fired from a Scythian archer's bow, but her beauty
astonished
Hippomenes even more; indeed her running enhanced it.
He saw the bright-coloured ribbons attached to her knees
and her ankles

fluttering gaily behind her, while over her ivory shoulders
her hair streamed back in the wind. The white of her girlish skin
was all suffused with a rosy glow, as a marble hall
will be steeped by the sun in counterfeit shade through a purple awning.
As Hippomenes watched her, the final lap was run to the finish,
and soon Atalanta was crowned with the laurel wreath of the victor.
The losers groaned in despair and paid their forfeit as promised.
'"Undeterred by the suitors' fate, Hippomenes boldly
marched to the front with his eyes firm-set on the young girl's face.
'Why cultivate easy glory,' he said, 'by trouncing these laggards?
You'd better compete with me. If fortune allows me the victory,
you'll not be angry at losing to such a hero as I am:
my father is Mégareus, king of Onchéstus, and his grandfather
was Neptune; so I am the great-grandson of the Lord of the Seas.
Moreover, my birth is matched by my courage; and if I am beaten,
what glory, great and abiding, must come from defeating Hippomenes!'
While he was making this speech, Atalanta observed him with tender
looks, uncertain whether she'd rather be winner or loser.
'Who is the god,' she reflected, 'who hates all beauty and wants
to destroy this man, by bidding him venture his own dear life

in order to gain my hand? I cannot be worth such a price.
It isn't his beauty that moves me – though that could also affect me;
he's only a boy! I am touched much more by his age than himself.
And yet he's a man of courage, undaunted by fear of death.
He's descended from Neptune, the god of the sea, in the fourth generation.
What's more, he loves me and longs so much to make me his wife
that he's ready to die if an unkind fortune refuses me to him.
Go while you may, fair stranger. My bed is polluted by bloodshed;
marriage to me is a cruel goal. No other woman
will spurn your suit and a sensible girl would be eager to win you. –
Yet why should I worry for *him*, when I've killed so many already?
It's his decision. Why shouldn't he die, since he isn't deterred
by the deaths of so many rivals and seems to be weary of living? –
So must he die because he wanted to live at my side?
Must he pay the price for his love in a death he doesn't deserve?
The violent hatred my victory will cost me could never be borne! –
But who will be guilty? Not I! – If only you'd give me up!
Or else, if you must be so crazy, if only you'd win the race!
How lovely he is with his boyish face, as fresh as a girl's!
Poor Hippomenes, no! I wish you had never seen me.
You truly deserved to live. If I had been blessed with a happier
lot and a churlish fate had not denied me a husband,
you were the one with whom I should gladly have shared my bed.'

She spoke like a girl who has never fallen in love before,
not knowing what she is doing, not understanding her
feelings.
'"Atalanta's father and all the people were now
demanding
the usual race, when Neptune's scion, Hippomenes,
anxiously
called upon me: 'O Venus, I humbly pray, watch over
this daring attempt of mine and foster the love you
have kindled!'
This touching prayer was wafted to me on a kindly
breeze.
My heart was moved, I admit, and I didn't delay my
assistance.
In Cyprus one of the richest parts of the land is
Támasus
(so the inhabitants call it); the council in olden times
once consecrated the region to me as a special gift
to enrich my temples. Right in its centre there gleams a
tree
with foliage of yellow and branches rustling with
yellow gold.
I chanced to be coming from there with three gold
apples I'd plucked
in my hand. I then went up to Hippomenes – nobody else
could see me – and gave him instructions on how he
should use the apples.
The trumpets sounded the signal and both competitors
sprang
like a flash from the starting line, heads forward, at full
speed grazing
the top of the sandy track. You'd think they could
skim the ocean
dry-footed or brush the standing ears in a white
cornfield.
The young man's spirits were lifted by all the cries of
support

which rang in his ears: 'Get a move on! Go for it, go for it now!
Faster, Hippomenes, faster! Now give it all you have got!
Don't dawdle, you're winning!' I couldn't be sure whether Megareus' son
or Schoéneus' daughter was more delighted by all this shouting.
Again and again Atalanta held back when she could have gone forward,
and after a long gaze into his eyes would reluctantly pass him.
Hippomenes' mouth was dry with exhaustion, he panted for breath,
and the finishing post was still in the distance. That was the moment.
He dropped the first of the three gold apples I'd plucked from the tree.
The girl was dazzled. Possessed by a wish for the gleaming fruit,
she swerved from the track to pick up the rolling golden temptation.
Hippomenes hurtled past and the stands resounded with cheers.
Atalanta soon made up for the time she had lost as she gathered
speed and advanced, till she'd left the youth behind her again.
Hippomenes threw her the second apple; she stopped, then followed
and overtook him once more. The end of the course was in sight.
'O goddess who showed me the way,' said Hippomenes, 'be with me now!'
Then out to the edge of the course, to slow Atalanta's return,
he tossed the glittering gold with all the power of his youthful

strength. Would she stop? Atalanta appeared to waver. I forced her
to fetch it, then made the apple more heavy, and so she was hindered
as much by the extra weight as the further delay that it cost.
My story must not outlast the time of the race itself.
Atalanta was beaten; the victor took his reward by the hand.

'"Surely, Adonis, I should have been thanked for my help and honoured
with incense. Hippomenes never remembered and failed to offer
incense or thanks. My goodwill suddenly turned to anger.
Smarting under this insult, I wasn't prepared to allow it
to happen again and I roused myself to make an example
of both. They were passing near to a temple, deep in the forest,
which once the hero Echíon, fulfilling a vow, had built
to Cýbele, mother of gods. Their journey had made them tired
and they needed to rest for a while. It was here that, excited by me,
Hippomenes felt an untimely urge to make love to his wife.
Quite close to the temple they managed to find a cavernous shelter,
dimly lit and covered above with natural limestone.
The place was hallowed by ancient worship and filled with the numerous
wooden statues of primitive gods that the priests had left there.
Hippomenes ventured inside and profaned the shrine with his lust.

The statues averted their eyes and tower-crowned* Cybele pondered
whether to plunge the guilty lovers beneath the Styx.
But the punishment seemed too light.* So their smooth white necks were thickly
covered in tawny manes, their fingers were bent into claws,
their shoulders became forequarters, their weight was centred inside
their massive chests and they swept the top of the sand with their tails.
Their faces were mirrors of anger, their conversation was growls.
Their marriage-bed was the forest floor. They were lions, and frightened
all but the Mighty Mother who tamed them to draw her chariot.
Dearest Adonis, avoid the lions,* avoid all kinds
of creatures that won't turn tail but bare their teeth for a fight.
Avoid them, I beg you. Don't let your courage destroy us both!"

ORPHEUS' SONG: VENUS AND ADONIS (2)

'So Venus warned and travelled away through the sky in her swan-drawn
chariot. Warnings, however, are never heeded by courage.
It chanced that Adonis' hounds had followed a well-marked trail
and roused a boar from its lair. As it tried to escape from the woodland,
Cinyras' youthful grandson pierced its flank with his weapon.
The creature at once dislodged the bloodstained point of the spear
with the crook of his snout. As Adonis backed for safety in panic,

the animal savagely charged and buried its tusks* deep into
his groin, so bringing him down on the gold sand, fatally wounded.
'Venus was driving across the sky in her light-built chariot,
borne on the wings of her swans, and still on her journey to Cyprus,
when far in the distance she heard the groans of her dying lover.
She pulled at the reins of her white-plumed birds till she faced his direction;
from high in the ether she saw him dead, in a pool of his own blood.
Leaping down to the earth, she tore her dress from her bosom,
she tore her hair and violently, bitterly, beat on her breast.
'Reviling the Fates for their harshness, "You shan't hold absolute sway!"
she cried. "My grief, Adonis, shall have an enduring memorial.
Every year your untimely death shall be re-enacted,*
and so the tale of my sad lamentation shall last for ever.
For now, your blood shall be changed to a flower. Proserpina* once
was allowed to change a beloved nymph into fragrant mint.
Shall I be grudged the transformation of Cinyras' grandson?"
So speaking, she sprinkled the blood of Adonis with scented nectar.
Touched by the droplets, the blood swelled up, like gleaming, transparent
bubbles rising in yellow mud. No more than a single
hour had passed when a deep red flower rose out of the blood,

like the flower of that fruit which hides its seeds in its
leathery rind,
the pomegranate fruit.* But this new flower has only a
short life:
flimsy and loose on its stem, it is easily shaken and blown
away by the winds which give it the name of anemone –
wind-flower.'*

BOOK 11

In *The Death of Orpheus* (1–66) we return to the famous minstrel. The description, in the style of a messenger-speech in Greek tragedy, of his violent death at the hands of the maenads must remind us of the death of Pentheus in 3.708–31. Orpheus' head floating downstream (taken from Virgil) and then crossing the sea allows Ovid to contrive a short metamorphosis of the snake which attacks it. In *The Punishment of the Maenads* (67–84) Bacchus changes the Thracian women to trees in a longer, more detailed transformation.

Bacchus is the link with the popular story of the Phrygian king, *Midas* (85–193), whose kindness the god rewarded by allowing him to choose whatever he wanted – in his case, the power to turn everything he touched to gold. The consequences of this foolish choice are memorably described, as is the further consequence of Midas' renewed stupidity in backing Pan against Apollo in a music contest.

Apollo transfers the scene a little way to Troy, where the poem's continuity will be based until 13.622. *Laömedon's Treachery* (194–220) tells of the city's first destruction by Hercules, aided by Telamon and his brother Peleus. This leads on to *Peleus and Thetis* (221–65), in which the mortal hero succeeds in dominating the sea-goddess, despite her power of self-metamorphosis. Peleus then falls on less happy times. After murdering his half-brother Phocus, he takes refuge at the *Court of Ceÿx*, king of Trachis (266–90, 346–409), where he learns how Ceÿx's brother *Daedalion* (291–345) was changed to a hawk in his anger and frustration at the callous lust or spite meted out to his daughter Chione by three of the gods – the old

theme persists. Peleus next learns from one of his own people, once again in exciting 'Greek messenger' mode, how all his cattle have been destroyed by a monster wolf, which turns out to have been sent by the Nereïd Psamathe in revenge for her murdered son Phocus. Psamathe has to be persuaded by her sister Thetis to dispose of the wolf by metamorphosis.

The various stories in this book so far, while ingeniously interconnected, may seem to have followed one another in slightly bewildering succession. For the next 339 lines Ovid asks his audience to concentrate on one long magnificent tale, *Ceÿx and Alcyone* (410–748). Although parts of this are composed in a grand epic manner, it is more than anything a romance, in which a devoted husband and wife, through no fault of their own, are parted and reunited by the power of the sea and the winds. The reunion is only partial, as one of the couple is dead, but metamorphosis makes it complete. The centrepiece is the tremendous description of the storm at sea, framed by Ceÿx' ship's gradual disappearance over the waves as he leaves his wife, and (after the interlude of Alcyone's dream) by the gradual reappearance of Ceÿx' drowned body as it is tossed towards the shore. The dream sequence has its own, typically Ovidian, character and includes a wonderful *ecphrasis* on the cave of Sleep. The closing lines, when the new-formed kingfishers breed their young at sea in the 'halcyon days', bring the romance to a tranquil and moving conclusion. This story differs from others in the poem in showing human beings as the victims of the elements in nature rather than of the gods, each other or their own desires.

The story of *Aesacus* (749–95), the son of Priam and brother of Hector, serves chiefly as a bridge to the Trojan War material which follows in Books 12 and 13. It also picks up themes from earlier stories in Book 11: metamorphosis to a bird is associated (as for Daedalion) with frustrated passion; and the death of Hesperia as a result of a snake bite recalls that of Eurydice and so the image of Orpheus at the very beginning of the book.

THE DEATH OF ORPHEUS

With songs such as these the Thracian minstrel* bewitched the forests,
entranced the beasts and compelled the rocks to follow behind him.
The wild Cicónian women, attired in their dappled fawnskins,
suddenly saw him from where they stood on a hilltop – Órpheus,
chanting his lays in gentle accord with the strings of his lyre.
One of the bacchanals, tossing her flowing hair in the breeze,
cried, 'Look! Look there! The man who rejects us!' and launched her thyrsus
straight at the head of the great musician who served Apollo.
The ivy-tipped spear inflicted a bruise without drawing blood.
Another maenad picked up a stone; it flew through the air,
but lyre and voice united to break its force, and it fell
in front of the poet's feet, as though it were begging forgiveness
for such a frenzied assault. Yet the women continued their reckless
aggression, restraint had fled and the spirit of madness reigned.
Orpheus' singing could well have weakened their shots, but cacophony
won. The hideous screech of the Phrygian pipe with its curved bell,
the banging of drums, the clapping of hands and the bacchanals' shrieking
drowned the sound of the lyre, and the voice of the bard could no longer

be heard. So the women's stones were at long last stained
with his blood.
First the maenads pounced on the innocent creatures that
still
lay under the spell of his music: the numberless birds and
the snakes,
the line of beasts which had followed in Orpheus' triumphal
procession.
Then, with their hands well bloodied, they turned on
Orpheus in person,
massing together like birds who have spied the nocturnal
screech-owl
flitting around in the daytime, or dogs at the morning fight
in the amphitheatre* who prey on a mortally wounded stag.
Each woman attacked the bard by flinging her leafy
thyrsus,
a weapon not made for such violent use. They then threw
clods
of earth, sharp-pointed rocks or branches ripped from the
trees.
Their madness had further weapons on which to draw. As it
happened,
some oxen were ploughing a nearby field, and the brawny
peasants
were sweating away as they dug the soil for the fruits of the
earth.
On sight of the maenad horde, the workmen took to their
heels
and abandoned their tools, the hoes, the heavy rakes and
the mattocks
lying dispersed on the empty fields. These tools were seized
by the savage women, who ripped the fierce-horned oxen to
pieces
and then rushed back to complete the murder of Orpheus.
The poet
extended his helpless arms. He spoke, but now for the first
time
spoke to no purpose; his voice had lost all power to move.

Those impious women destroyed him, and through those lips, whose wonderful
songs had attracted the rocks and touched the hearts of the beasts,
his soul passed forth with his breath and melted into the winds.
All his companions wept for Orpheus: the sorrowing birds,
the beasts of the wild, the stubborn rocks and the trees which so often
had followed his singing. The trees, indeed, dropped all of their leaves
and mourned shorn-headed. It's also said that the rivers were swollen
with tears they had shed themselves; while the nymphs of the streams and woodlands
edged their garments with black and allowed their hair to flow loose.
Orpheus' limbs lay scattered around; but his lyre and his head
were thrown in the river Hebrus. Afloat mid-stream – oh wonder! –
the instrument uttered a plaintive moan, the lifeless tongue
emitted a feeble dirge and the banks re-echoed in sorrow.
The river carried them both to the sea, where the poet took leave
of his homeland and found his way to Methýmna on Lesbos' coast.
Here, as his head lay exposed on an alien shore, the hair
still dripping with salt sea-spray, a fierce snake made to attack it.
Apollo at last intervened. The snake had opened its fangs,
but its gaping jaws were hardened to stone and frozen in motion.

Orpheus' shade passed under the earth. He recognized all
the places he'd seen before. As he searched the Elýsian Fields,
he found the wife he had lost and held her close in his arms.
At last the lovers could stroll together, side by side –
or she went ahead and he followed; then Orpheus ventured in front
and knew he could now look back on his own Eurýdice safely.

THE PUNISHMENT OF THE MAENADS

Bacchus, however, was angry at losing the priest of his mysteries*
and would not allow the crime of his murder to go unpunished.
There in the forest were all the Thracian women who'd taken
part in the outrage. At once he tied them in twisted tree-roots.
Attacking each one at the point where she'd stopped her pursuit, he extended
her toes and forced the extremities down into solid earth.
Imagine a bird which has caught her leg in a crafty bird-catcher's
hidden snare and knows that she's trapped; imagine her flapping
her wings in terror and drawing the cord of the noose ever tighter.
So, when a woman was stuck on her own with her feet embedded,
she tried in a panic to pull herself free; but the supple roots
had her tight in their clutches and held her down as she struggled to jump out.

Desperately searching to find her feet, her toes and her toenails,
she saw that the bark was creeping over her slender calves.
As she tried to beat on her thigh to express her grief and frustration,
her fist's power struck upon wood; her breasts then turned into wood,
and soon her shoulders were wood. You'd suppose that her outstretched arms
were genuine branches – indeed you'd be perfectly right in supposing it.

MIDAS

Bacchus still was displeased. He abandoned Thrace altogether
and, taking a worthier band of dancers, he made for Tmolus'
vines and the river Pactólus, although its waters were not yet
golden and men hadn't started to covet its precious sand.*
Surrounding the god was the usual throng of bacchants and satyrs.
Only Silénus* was not in attendance. The Phrygian peasants
had found the old drunkard reeling, bedecked in his garland of flowers,
and brought him to Midas, the king whom Orpheus from Thrace had instructed
in Dionýsiac rites when he taught Eumólpus* of Athens.
As soon as the king understood that his guest was a fellow initiate,
to honour Silenus' arrival, in genial spirit he ordered
a feast which lasted for ten continuous days and nights.

At the end of that time, when the morning star had brought up the rear
of the other stars in the sky, King Midas blithely went out
to the Lydian fields and restored the old man to his foster-child, Bacchus.
Delighted to see his father again, Dionýsus gave Midas
the welcome but dangerous right to choose any boon he desired.
The king, not one to employ such a gift very sensibly, answered,
'Grant that whatever I touch with my body may turn to gold.'
Bacchus agreed to this wish and gave its asker the power
which would prove his downfall, sad that the king hadn't chosen more wisely.
Midas departed in high delight with his bane of a present,
and put the gift to the test at once by touching some objects.
Passing an oak with low green boughs, he uncertainly pulled
at a leafy twig; the twig and its foliage turned to gold.
He lifted a stone from the ground; that also became pure gold.
He touched a clod; the power in his fingers converted the soft earth
into a hard nugget. Plucking the ears in a ripe cornfield,
he reaped a harvest of gold. He picked an apple and held it –
a present from the Hespérides' garden? He rested his hands
on the doors of his lofty palace: the doors appeared to be glowing.
Again, if he washed his hands in running water, the shower
he shook from his fingers might well have seduced fair Dánaë's virtue.*
'Gold! A world full of gold!' he exclaimed; his mind could barely

contain his hopes. As he gloated, his servants laid him a table
piled with the choicest of meats and loaves of bread in abundance.
That was the moment of truth. When Midas hungrily touched
the bread with his fingers, Ceres' gifts grew rigidly hard.
Or if he attempted to tear some meat in his greedy teeth,
he found he was uselessly crunching on wafers of yellowish metal.
He mixed fresh water with wine, the god who had granted his wish;
but all that entered his throat was a trickle of molten gold.
Stunned by this turn of events, now wealthy but desolate, Midas
longed to escape from his riches and loathed the thing that he'd prayed for.
Platefuls to eat, but perpetually hungry! His throat was parched
with a burning thirst. By his own act, gold had become his detested
torturer. Raising his hands and his radiant arms to the sky,
'O father Bacchus,' he cried, 'forgive me! I know I have sinned,
But pity my plight and rescue me now from the curse that seduced me!'
The gods can be kind. So Bacchus, when Midas admitted his error,
cancelled the gift he had faithfully yielded and cured the affliction.
'So that you needn't remain,' he said, 'encased in the gold
you desired so unwisely, proceed to the river that flows by the mighty

city of Sardis. Follow the ridge of the bank upstream
and travel along it until you come to Pactolus' source.
Then plunge your head in the foaming spring where it
gushes most strongly,
and purge your guilt as you cleanse your body.' The king
went up
to the water as bidden. The power of the Midas touch
imbued it
with gold and passed from his human body into the river.
The vein is now old, but the particles still flood over the
fields
to harden the soil with gold and to dye the earth-clods
yellow.

Disgusted by wealth, King Midas haunted the fields and the
forests,
worshipping Pan, who always inhabits the mountain caves.
But his wits remained as obtuse as ever. Moreover, his utter
stupidity, once again, was destined to prove his downfall.
You've heard of Tmolus, the rocky mountain which steeply
ascends
to a wide view over the straits, with a range extending as far
as Sardis up to the north, in the south to tiny Hypaépa.
Here Pan was boasting about his piping skills to the lissom
nymphs. As he practised an easy tune on his wax-bound
reeds,
he dared to disparage Apollo's playing compared with his
own
and entered an ill-matched competition, with Tmolus as
judge.*
The venerable judge assumed his seat on the mountain he
ruled
and brushed the trees away from his ears. His dark green
ringlets
were only wreathed in the foliage of oak, with acorns
dangling
around his temples. Then, with a glance at the god of the
flocks,

he said, 'I am ready.' So Pan performed on his rustic pipes,
and his barbarous strains entranced the ears of Midas, who chanced
to be there when he played. When the piece was finished, Tmolus solemnly
turned his head in Apollo's direction, and so did his forest.
Phoebus was crowned with a wreath of Parnássian bay on his golden
hair, and he swept the ground with his mantle of Tyrian purple.
His lyre was richly inlaid with jewels and Indian ivory.
Holding the instrument firm in his left hand, plectrum in right,
he struck the pose of a maestro; and then he plucked at the strings
with his practised thumb, till Tmolus, enthralled by the beautiful music,
notified Pan that his pipes must yield the palm to the lyre.
All agreed with the judgment pronounced by the sacred mountain;
only Midas challenged the verdict and called it unfair.
Apollo couldn't allow such insensitive ears to preserve
their human appearance. He lengthened them out; he filled them with shaggy
grey hairs; he made them floppy and able to waggle their tips.
The rest of King Midas belonged to a man: his other members
remained intact, but he wore the ears of a lumbering donkey.
Needless to say, he was anxious to hide them and tried to undo
the effect of his shameful appendage by wearing a purple tiara.*

But, sadly, the servant who cut his hair was bound to notice
the shocking additions. Although the barber was itching to broadcast
what he had seen, he hadn't the nerve to betray his master.
Unable, however, to keep the secret all to himself,
he slipped away, dug a hole in the ground and whispered inside it,
'King Midas has ass's ears!' He then re-shovelled the soil
in the empty hole, to bury all trace of his words, and quietly
vanished. But soon a close-packed cluster of quivering reeds
began to grow on the spot and, after a year of ripening,
gave the planter away. In the breeze from the south they would rustle
and whistle the buried words, 'King Midas has ass's ears!'

LAÖMEDON'S TREACHERY

His vengeance completed, divine Apollo took off from Tmolus.
He flew through the sky towards the straits of Néphele's daughter,
Helle,* and landed on Trojan soil, Laömedon's country.
Close to the sea, to the right of Sigéum, the left of Rhoetéum,
there stands an old altar of Jove the oracular, god of the thunder.
Here Apollo could see Laömedon starting to build
the walls of recently founded Troy. The great undertaking
was only progressing slowly and help was certainly needed.
So he and Neptune, the god of the trident and lord of the swelling
ocean, took on the appearance of mortals and struck a bargain
with Phrygia's king to construct his walls for a sum of gold.

When the work was finished, the king refused to pay up and crowned
his broken promise by swearing he'd never agreed to reward them.
'You shan't get away with this!' cried Neptune, and promptly diverted
the mass of his waters to swamp the shores of the miserly Trojan.
He flooded the land till it looked like sea, depriving the farmers
of all their crops and submerging the fields in the rush of the tide.
That wasn't enough: Laömedon's daughter, Hesíone, had to be
offered up to a fierce sea-monster. Hercules rescued
the girl from the rock where they'd chained her, but when he demanded the horses
agreed as his prize for the exploit, his promised reward was denied him;
and so he subdued twice-perjured Troy and captured her walls.
Youñg Télamon joined the campaign and achieved the distinction of winning
Hesione's hand. His brother Péleus, who also took part,
had a goddess for wife and was famous already – as glad to be wedded
to Néreüs' daughter as proud of his grandfather.* Plenty of mortals
are grandsons of Jove, but only Peleus married a goddess.

PELEUS AND THETIS

How was this marriage arranged? Old Próteus* had said to Thetis,
'You need to conceive a child, wave-goddess; you're destined to bear
a hero who, grown to his prime, shall challenge the deeds of his father
and merit a mightier name.' Now Jupiter hotly desired
fair Thetis, but could he allow the world to contain a being
more mighty than him? He couldn't; and so, to avoid a union
with Nereus' daughter, he ordered his grandson Peleus to woo her
in place of himself and take the maid of the sea to his bosom.
Picture a sickle-shaped bay on Thessaly's coast, with its arms
jutting out like the ends of a bow. If the water inside it were deeper,
there'd be a harbour; but only a film of sea spreads over
the top of the sand. The shore is so firm that it shows no footprints,
it's easy to walk on and isn't bestrewn with squelching seaweed.
Nearby is a coppice of myrtles, laden with black and green berries.
There, in its heart, imagine a grotto, which could be natural
or artificial, more likely the latter; and this is where Thetis,
riding her bridled dolphin, would often arrive quite naked.
One day she was lying there fast asleep, when Peleus surprised her
as ordered, and then, since she wouldn't respond to his wooing entreaties,
he clasped her neck in his amorous arms and attempted to rape her.

His boldness would have succeeded if Thetis hadn't made use
of the magical skills she possessed and kept on changing her shape.
She took the form of a bird, but he still held on to the bird.
She changed to a sturdy tree, and he clung to the trunk like ivy.
She next adopted the shape of a black-striped tigress; at last
her assailant, in terror, relaxed the hold of his arms on her body.
Peleus next appealed to the sea-gods, pouring wine
on the waves and offering entrails of sheep with smoking incense,
until the Carpathian prophet, Proteus, rose from the depths
and said to him, 'Aeacus' son, you shall win the bride you are seeking.
All you must do is to catch her asleep in the rocky cave
and trap her unconscious limbs in the tangling snare of a rope.
Don't let her elude you by falsely assuming a hundred disguises.
Just squeeze her firmly until she returns to her normal shape.'
When Proteus had given this counsel, he plunged his face in the sea,
and his native waves closed over his head on his final words.
Titan the sun god was sinking and guiding his chariot downwards
into the western waves as the beautiful Néreïd, Thetis,
left her home in the water and went to her usual bedroom.
Peleus hardly had time to entrap the nymph in his noose

when she started to take new shapes, until she saw she was tightly
gripped, with her arms stretched out on either side of her body.
At last she gave in, as she sighed, 'You win! Some god must be helping you.'
Now she was Thetis for real! The hero fondly embraced her;
he had his desire and planted the seed of the mighty Achílles.

PELEUS AT THE COURT OF CEŸX (1)

Peleus was lucky, lucky both in his wife and his son,
and all went well for the hero, except for the guilt he incurred
in the murder of Phocus, his half-brother.* Banished from home with the blood
still fresh on his hands, he finally found a welcome in Trachis,
a land that was free of bloodshed and violence under its ruler
Céÿx, Lucifer's son, whose face most often reflected
his father's brightness; but then it was overcast with untypical
gloom, because he was mourning the sudden loss of his brother.*
When Peleus arrived in this country, depressed and tired from his travels,
he passed through the gates of the city with only a handful of followers,
leaving the flocks of sheep and the herds he had driven along
in a shady valley not far from the walls. As soon as he gained
the chance of a royal audience, he entered the hall as a suppliant,

holding an olive-branch wreathed in wool, and declared his name
and the name of his father. The only thing he concealed was his blood-guilt;
his exile was falsely explained away. When he asked permission
to earn his bread in the city of Trachis or out in the country,
Ceÿx gently replied: 'This kingdom welcomes all strangers.
Our comforts are open for even the humblest of folk to enjoy.
Kindness apart, you're a famous man and Jove is your grandfather –
powerful points in your favour. You need not ask for assistance.
All that you seek shall be yours, and whatever your eyes can see
you may call your own, for what it is worth – though I wish it were better!'
Ceÿx was weeping. When Peleus, backed by his followers, asked him
what was causing him such distress, he told them his story:

CEŸX'S STORY: DAEDALION

'Look at that bird of prey in the sky, upsetting all
of the other birds. Perhaps you suppose that he always had wings.
He used to be human, already a sharp-eyed, violent and warlike
creature – character seems to survive any transformation.
His name was Daedálion. He and I were sons of the star
who summons the dawn in the morning and vanishes after the others.

Mine was a peace-loving nature. I cherished peace as I cherished
my wedded life, but my brother's delight was in brutal warfare.
His manly courage was shown in the conquest of kings and their peoples,
where now in his altered shape he pursues the doves of Boeótia.
He had a daughter, a girl of exceptional loveliness, Chíone,
wooed by a thousand suitors and ready for marriage at fourteen.
One day, when Apollo and Mercury, Maia's son, were returning,
the one from his temple at Delphi, the other from Mount Cylléne,
both at once set eyes on the girl and were fired with passion.
Apollo deferred his hopes of enjoyment until it was night,
but Mercury couldn't endure to wait and touched young Chione's
face with his wand of sleep. She yielded at once to his magic,
and so he was able to rape her. The sky was dotted with stars
when Phoebus disguised himself as a crone and stole the pleasure
his brother had taken before him. Nine months went by and Chione,
pregnant by wing-footed Mercury, bore him a son, the knavish
Autólycus, wily and skilful in every kind of deception,
a rogue who was thoroughly versed in his father's arts and perfectly
happy to turn pure white into black, jet black into white.
Chione's son by Apollo (she actually brought forth twins)
was called Philámmon, famed for his singing and skill on the lyre.
But what is the use of producing twins, of having attracted

two of the gods, of being descended from such a brave father
and starry grandfather? Glory, perhaps, is often a snare.
It certainly was so for one, since Chione ventured to claim
she surpassed Diana and moved the goddess to violent anger
by finding fault with her face. "No doubt she'll be happy with *facts*!"
Diana retorted in fury, and instantly drew her bow
to release an arrow which pierced the tongue of her wicked traducer.
The tongue went silent, the voice was lost and the words wouldn't follow;
as Chione struggled to speak, her life flowed out with her blood.
I, her poor uncle Ceÿx, wretchedly cradled her body
and grieved as a father might. How sadly I broke the news
to my brother who loved his daughter so dearly, and tried to console him!
Daedalion seemed to respond like a rock unmoved by the crash
of the waves; he was utterly sunk in grief for the loss of his daughter.
But when he set eyes on the pyre with her burning body, he tried
four times to throw himself into the flames. Four times he was beaten
back. Then he took to his heels in a frenzy and rushed all over
the fields, like a bullock stung on the neck by a swarm of hornets.
Already I fancied his running was superhumanly fast,
and you might quite well have supposed that wings had grown on his feet.
Daedalion managed to dodge us all; in his longing for death,

he ran right up to the top of Parnássus and jumped from a precipice.
Phoebus in pity transformed him into a bird and suddenly raised him, suspended on wings in the air. He gave him a hooked beak,
talons to claw at his prey, the courage he'd owned from his birth,
and a strength more powerful than you would expect in so small a body.
Now he's a hawk, a mischievous creature who vents his rage
on the kingdom of birds and inflicts his pain and distress on his neighbours.'

PELEUS AT THE COURT OF CEŸX (2)

While Ceÿx, Lucifer's son, was telling this curious story about the change to his brother, a man burst into the palace,
gasping for breath. It was Peleus' herdsman, Phócian Onétor.
'Peleus! Peleus!' he shouted, 'I bring you news of a dreadful disaster!' Peleus told him at once to come out with his message,
and even Ceÿx, with quivering cheeks, was filled with suspense.
The herdsman went on: 'I had driven my weary cattle down to the curving shore when the sun had just arrived at its zenith,
one half of its daily course now run, with the other ahead.
Some of the herd had sunk to their knees on the yellow sand
and were lying there, gazing across the broad expanse of the ocean.
Some were slowly and aimlessly wandering over the beach,

while others were swimming with only their heads and necks above water.
Close by is a shrine, not a splendid temple of marble and gold,
but a timber structure, set in the shade of an ancient wood.
Nereus and his daughters are worshipped here – a fisherman drying
his nets on the shore explained that they are the local sea-gods.
Next to the shrine is a swamp, surrounded by thickets of willow
and caused by the wash of the nearby waves. From here a succession
of crashes and howls could be heard, to the terror of neighbouring farms,
when a huge and sinister monster, a wolf, emerged from the marsh reeds.
His snapping jaws were horribly smeared with foam and with clotted
blood, while his glaring eyes were ablaze with a fiery glow.
Crazed as the creature was with rage and hunger alike,
his rage was the stronger. He wasn't concerned to avert starvation
or ease his hunger by slaughtering only a few of the cattle.
He had to destroy the whole of the herd and to get his teeth
into every animal. Some of my fellow servants also
were savaged and mauled to death while trying to fend him off.
Blood streamed on the beach, in the shallow waves, in the swamp where the bellows
of pain still echoed. But no hesitation, delay will be fatal!
While anything's left to be saved, we must pull together. To arms,

to arms, my friends! Let us all join forces to fight the monster!'
The herdsman's story was ended. Peleus calmly accepted
his losses; he guessed they must be a funeral gift from the Nereïd
Psámathe, paid to Phocus her son, the brother he'd killed.
But his host, King Ceÿx, ordered his men to put on their armour
and grab their spears for the fray. He was making ready to join them
himself, but his wife Alcýone, roused by the general uproar,
rushed from her chamber. Her hair was not yet properly dressed
and fell into disarray as she clung to her husband's neck
and implored him with tears in her eyes to send the necessary help,
without going in person, and so to preserve two lives in one.
Peleus said to the queen, 'Though your wifely fears do you credit,
please lay them aside. I thank you both for the help you have promised,
but would not wish you to fight this monster on my account.
First I must pray to the Nereïd.' All climbed up to a tower
on the top of the fortress, a lighthouse used as a welcome landmark
for battered vessels; and here they groaned in horror to view
the cattle strewn on the shore and the killer wolf with his fangs
still dripping, his shaggy coat all stained and matted with blood.
Then Peleus stretched his arms to the shore of the open sea
and called on the green nymph, Psamathe. 'Now put an end to your anger
and grant me your help!' he prayed. These words of entreaty failed

to persuade the goddess, so Thetis* added her prayers to her husband's
and won forgiveness. But though the wolf had been ordered away
from his murderous feast, he was rabid with blood's sweet taste and continued
until, when his jaws had closed on the neck of a heifer he'd mangled,
Psamathe turned him to marble. His body retained its shape
and all but its colour; the colour of marble sufficed to show
that this was a wolf no longer and none need fear it in future.
Fate, however, would not permit the fugitive Peleus
to settle in Trachis. His wanderings took him as far as Magnésia,
and there Acástus, the king of Thessaly, purged him of blood-guilt.

CEŸX AND ALCYONE

Meanwhile, King Ceÿx, deeply disturbed by his brother's miraculous
transformation, as well as the strange events that had followed,
decided he ought to consult the oracle, mankind's comfort,
and made arrangements to visit Apollo's temple at Claros*
(Delphi was blocked by brigands led by the impious Phorbas).
Before he sailed, he unfolded his plan to his faithful wife,
Alcyone. Chilled to the bone, she immediately turned as pale

as the wood of a boxtree; and floods of tears streamed down her cheeks.
Three times she attempted to speak, but words were stifled by weeping.
Her tender reproaches were constantly interrupted by sobs,
as she said: 'My dearest husband, what have I done? Have your feelings
towards me changed? Your first concern was always for me.
Can you now abandon your wife without some qualm of misgiving?
Do you have to travel so far? Will you love me more if we're parted?
Just tell me you're journeying overland; then I'll only miss you
and won't be also afraid. I'll fret without being frightened.
But no, you are going by sea, and that is the ugly picture
which fills me with terror. I recently noticed a wrecked ship's boards
on the shore, and I've often read names on graves containing no bodies.
Don't be tricked into thinking that you'll be safer because
your wife is the daughter of Aéolus, god of the winds, who confines
their powerful blasts in his prison and calms the seas as he wishes.
As soon as those winds are released and have taken control of the waves,
they can do whatever they please; both land and sea are defenceless
from end to end of the world; the clouds are thrown into chaos,
wildly colliding and sparking with bright red flashes of lightning.
The more I have come to know the winds (as I did as a child
in my father's house), the more I believe that they ought to be feared.

But if, my beloved husband, no prayers can ever persuade you
to change your decision, and if you are so determined to go,
please take me with you. At least we shall ride the storm together.
With you I shall only fear what I'm facing. Whatever that is,
we shall share the danger and brave the waves in each other's company.'
The son of the morning star was moved by Aeolus' daughter's
tearful words. He adored his wife as fondly as ever,
but Ceÿx wasn't prepared to abandon his purposed voyage
or to grant Alcyone's wish to sail into danger beside him.
He tried again and again to allay her fears, but failed
entirely to gain her support. Then he offered one further sop,
which changed the mind of his loving wife and settled the matter:
'For us any parting is bound to be long, but I solemnly swear
by my father's rays that, provided destiny brings me home,
you shall see me return before two moons have grown to their fullness.'
This promise induced her at last to hope that he might come back.
At once he ordered a ship to be brought out of dock and launched
with all its proper equipment. As soon as Alcyone saw it,
she shuddered again, as though she divined what was going to happen.
The tears welled up as she clasped her husband's neck in her arms

for her last pathetic farewell, before she collapsed on the ground.
Though Ceÿx looked for excuses to dally, his crew in their two ranks
started to pull their oars to their sturdy chests and to cut
the waves with their evenly balanced strokes. Eyes streaming, Alcyone
raised her head and watched her husband standing aloft
on the stern and waving goodbye. Then she waved back. As the ship
pulled further away from land and the faces on board grew blurred,
her eyes continued to follow the craft as it swiftly receded
towards the horizon. The hull disappeared, but the sails were still visible,
fluttering high on the mast. When those had vanished as well,
Alcyone trudged back home to her empty chamber and sank
on her bed. As her head hit the pillow, she burst once more into tears;
lying there made her remember the part of her life she was missing.

The ship was clear of the port and the rigging had started to rattle.
The crew stopped rowing and turned their oars alongside the vessel;
they braced the yard to the top of the mast and unfurled the sails
to their fullest extent, in order to catch the favouring breeze.
Half of the voyage was still to be run – it could have been more
than half – and land was a long way off, both ahead and behind,
when, as night was falling, the sea began to grow choppy and white;

a driving wind sprang up with greater force from the east.
'Lower the yard,' the captain shouted, 'and take in sail!'
But his orders were drowned by the shrieking gale; not a single word
of command could be heard for the crash of the waves.
But orders weren't needed.
The sailors jumped to the different tasks of shipping the oars,
plugging the oar-holes, furling the sail and grabbing the yard
to fasten it down; or baling out water and pouring the sea
back into the sea. Throughout this scurry of hectic activity
the storm grew wilder and wilder; the winds engaged from all quarters
in violent conflict and roused the waves to an angry turmoil.
The captain panicked and had to admit that the whole situation
was out of control; he had no idea what orders to give.
Disaster had struck with a force too great for his skill to contend with.
The sounds were deafening: yells of the sailors, creaking of cables,
the roar of the rushing waves, with the claps and rolls of the thunder.
The sea was lifted towards the sky and appeared to touch it,
drenching the layers of lowering cloud in showers of spray.
Its colour kept changing: now it was yellow with sand churned up
from the bottommost depths, and then it was black as the streams of the Styx,
and sometimes white when it flattened out into hissing foam.

The Trachínian vessel herself was subjected to similar changes:
now high up in the air, as though on top of a mountain,
she appeared to look down on the valleys below, with hell at the bottom;
then, after she'd plunged to the depths, ringed round by a circle of sea,
you'd think she was gazing up to the sky from a whirling abyss.
Often you'd hear an enormous crash as her sides were pounded,
a crash as loud as the noise of an iron battering-ram
or a catapult forcing a breach in the crumbling walls of a fortress.
Imagine a savage lion, who gains new strength as he charges
and boldly confronts the weapons and spears held out by the hunters;
so, when the winds sprang up and lashed the waves to a fury,
the waters attacked the ship's defences and towered above them.
Soon the wedges which tightened the boards worked loose, and cracks
appeared as the caulking failed, admitting the deadly flood.
The clouds then suddenly burst and the rain poured down in torrents.
You'd think that the whole of the sky was falling into the sea,
or else that the sea had swollen and risen as far as the sky.
The sails of the ship were drenched as the waters of heaven and ocean
were intermingled completely. The stars had all disappeared,
and the darkness of night was intensified by the black of the storm.
The impenetrable gloom was only broken by brilliant flashes

of lightning, which made the waves resemble a blazing
inferno.
The sea now started to leap right into the hollow frame
of the vessel. Imagine a soldier, braver than all his
comrades,
repeatedly trying to scale a beleaguered city's walls
and at last succeeding as, fired with heroic ambition, he
holds
his position single-handed against a thousand
defenders.
So after the waves had pounded the ship's steep sides
nine times,
a tenth wave, rising with more gigantic strength than
the others,
never abandoned its tireless assault on the battered
hull,
until it had landed between the walls of the captured
vessel.
Thus part of the sea was still attempting to force an
entry,
while part was already inside. The crew were all in
confusion,
like men in a city with some of the enemy undermining
the walls from outside and others firmly established
within.
Seamanship failed and morale had collapsed. Such
an onrush of waves,
such an onrush of death was breaking over the sailors'
heads.
They burst into tears, or gaped dumbfounded, or
blessed their friends
who could hope to be buried. Perhaps they appealed to
the gods in prayer,
uselessly raising their arms towards the invisible
heavens
and begging for help. Perhaps they thought of their
brothers and parents,

their homes with their wives and children, and all they had left behind them.
Ceÿx remembered his dear Alcyone. Hers was the only
name on his lips. His wife was all he regretted and longed for,
although he was glad that she wasn't beside him. He wished he could look
once more in his country's direction and face his home for the last time,
but didn't know where to turn. The sea was churning and swirling
so wildly, the whole of the sky was hidden behind those murky
layers of pitch-black clouds, and the night was darker than ever.
In a spinning gust of tempestuous rain the mast was shattered,
and so was the helm. Then one huge wave in a soaring curve,
like a victor triumphantly straddling his spoils, looked down on the others
and dropped with a crash on the ship with a force like the Athos and Pindus
mountains, should they be wrenched from their own foundations and bodily
thrown in the open sea. The blow was as powerful as heavy,
and plunged the boat to the bottom. Most of the sailors were also
thrust below in the swirl; they never returned to gasp air
and the ocean took them. The rest grabbed hold of planks from the keel
and fragments of wreckage. Ceÿx himself clung on with the hand
that once had wielded a sceptre, invoking the names of his father,
the morning star, and his wife's great father, the god of the winds –

to no purpose, alas! As he struggled to stay afloat, he chiefly
called on Alcyone; she was the one he remembered and thought of.
He prayed that the waves might carry his body where *she* might find it,
and loving hands should be able to bury his lifeless remains.
Whenever the waves permitted the swimmer to open his lips,
he shouted the name of the wife from whom he was parted, or murmured it
into the billows. But then the waves on which he was tossing
were suddenly overwhelmed by a single arch of black water,
which broke on top of his head and finally forced him under.
The morning star on the following day was completely obscured
and no one could have observed it. Since Lucifer wasn't permitted
to leave the sky, he covered his face in a mantle of clouds.

Meanwhile, Alcyone, still unaware of this dreadful disaster,
was counting each night that passed and eagerly working on garments
for Ceÿx to wear, or weaving clothes for herself to greet
his return, as she fondly promised herself he would come back home.
She worshipped all of the gods with the pious tribute of incense,
but visited Juno's temple* more than the shrines of the others.

She came to the goddess's altar to offer prayers for the husband
who was no more – for his safety at sea and return to her own arms,
not to the arms of another woman. This final petition,
of all her requests, was the only one which could ever be granted.
But Juno was not prepared to continue receiving prayers
for a lifeless corpse; her altars could not be polluted by unclean
hands.* So she said to Iris, her trusty conveyor of orders:
'Quick, now! I want you to visit the palace of drowsy Sleep.
Instruct him to send a dream to Alcyone. Say it must take
the form of Ceÿx and tell the truth of his sad demise.'
Juno had spoken. Then Iris dressed herself in her cloak
of a thousand colours, she painted the sky with the arch of the rainbow,
and made as she had been told for the cloud-wrapped palace of Somnus.
Picture a long, deep cave, not far from Cimmérian country,*
bored in a mountain, where indolent Sleep has his hearth and his home.
The sun never filters into this place with its light in the morning,
at noon or at close of day. Here vapour and murky fog
are exhaled from the lungs of the earth in a strange, mysterious twilight.
No crested cockerels are wide awake and ready to summon
the dawn with their crowing. The silence is undisturbed by the barking
of jittery dogs or the squawking of even more watchful geese.*
Not a sound can be heard; no howling of beasts, no lowing of cattle,

no rustling of branches, nor human voices raised in a quarrel.
This is the dwelling of noiseless repose, except that a trickling
stream of water from Lethe,* down at the cave's very bottom,
babbles along and induces sleep with the tinkle of pebbles.
In front of the cavern's mouth luxuriant poppies are blooming,
with numberless herbs from whose juices sleep is distilled by the dewy
night and sprinkled over the darkened lands of the earth.
To avoid any creaking of doors as they turn on their hinges, there isn't
a single door to the house nor a single guard on the threshold.
But deep in the heart of the cave, raised high, there's a couch made of ebony,
covered in feathery cushions, black, with a dusky bedspread.
Here Somnus himself is resting his body, relaxed and lethargic;
and round their master, in various forms of disguise, are lying
the phantom dreams, as many to count as the leaves in the forest,
the ears in a harvest field or the grains of sand on the seashore.
As soon as Iris had entered the cave and brushed aside
the dreams that were blocking her path, the house of Sleep was aglow
with the sheen from her dress. But the god was hardly able to open
his sluggish, weighed-down eyelids. He kept repeatedly sinking

back on the couch and nodding his drooping head on his chest.
He finally shook himself out of himself, to rise on his elbow
and question Iris (he knew who she was) on the cause of her visit.
'Sleep,' she replied, 'who quietens the world, most gentle of gods,
O Sleep, who gives peace to the mind, who banishes care, who refreshes
bodies exhausted by painful tasks and renews them for fresh toil,
order your dreams, who mimic the likeness of genuine forms,
to go to Trachis, Hercules' home, in the guise of King Ceÿx,
and enter Alcyone's mind to fashion the wraith of a shipwreck.
These are Juno's commands.' Her mission duly accomplished,
Iris departed. She couldn't endure the power of slumber
a moment longer. She felt it stealing over her body
and made her escape to return, as she came, by way of the rainbow.
Somnus, out of the horde of his thousand children, awakened
Mórpheus, the master mimic, the quickest of all to capture
a person's walk, his facial expression and tone of voice;
he'll also adopt his original's clothing and typical language.
Morpheus, however, can only imitate human beings.
Another, called Ícelos by the gods, Phobétor* by ordinary
mortals, can turn into birds or beasts or long-tailed reptiles.
A third in the family, Phántasos, practises different skills:
his deception involves transforming himself into earth or water,
mountainous rocks or trees, and other inanimate objects.
Some of the dreams will appear at night to kings or to prominent

figures, while others will visit the general mass of the people.
Old Sleep passed all of them by, till he picked out one of the brethren,
Morpheus, the dream whom he specially wanted to execute Iris'
commission. Then overcome once again by languid exhaustion,
he climbed back on to his couch and his head sank down on the pillow.

Morpheus floated on noiseless wings through the murky darkness,
and soon he arrived in the city of Trachis, where, doffing his wings,
he assumed the form and likeness of Ceÿx. Sickly pale
as a lifeless corpse, and wearing no clothes, he stood at the foot
of the wretched Alcyone's bed. His beard appeared to be dripping,
and sea-water might have been flowing in streams from his sodden locks.
Then leaning over the bed and weeping profusely, he poured
these words in the sleeper's ears: 'My unhappy wife, do you recognize
Ceÿx, or am I so altered by death? One look, and you'll know me.
In place of your husband, your husband's ghost is standing before you.
None of your prayers for my safety, Alcyone, helped me at all.
I am dead, and you mustn't pretend to yourself that I'll ever come back.
As I sailed across the Aegean, my ship was caught in a violent
gale from the south and tossed by its stormy blasts to destruction.

My voice was vainly shouting your name when the waves washed over
my head and silenced all speech. This isn't a message of doubtful
meaning or substance. It isn't a wandering rumour. No!
It is I, your shipwrecked Ceÿx in person, reporting my own death.
Rise, then, and weep! Put on garments of black! Do not send me down
to the shadowy ghosts of Hades without the rituals of mourning!'
Morpheus mimicked the voice of Ceÿx, to make Alcyone
think that Ceÿx was there. Moreover, the tears he was shedding
appeared to be real, and his gestures exactly resembled her husband's.
Sobbing and weeping, the queen kept flailing about in her sleep,
as she felt with her arms for a body, but only captured the air.
'Wait!' she shouted. 'Don't hurry away, you must take me with you!'
The sound of her voice with the sight of her 'husband' then startled and shook her
awake. She first looked round to establish if what she had seen
was physically there (the servants, aroused by her cries, had entered
the chamber with torches). When Ceÿx was not to be found in the room,
she struck on her cheeks and ripped her dress away from her bosom
to beat her breasts. She didn't trouble to loosen her hair,
but tore it out as it was. When her nurse asked why she was grieving,
Alcyone answered, 'I'm finished, I'm finished! My Ceÿx is dead,

and I am dead too. Don't try to console me, your words will be wasted.
Ceÿx is shipwrecked and drowned. I saw him, I knew who he was.
As he started to leave me, I wanted to stop him and held out my arms.
It was only his ghost, but even his ghost was so clear, it was truly
my husband. I'll freely admit that his face was not as it usually
looks; it lacked the starry brightness he owes to his father.
Oh pity me, nurse! I saw his body all naked and pale,
his hair still dripping with water. Look over here to the place
where the poor wretch stood!' Then turning to see if he'd left any footprints,
'Oh Ceÿx,' she sighed; 'your fate was what I foreboded and feared
when I begged you not to desert me and risk such a dangerous voyage.
But since you were going away to your death, I wish at least
you had taken me with you too. Far better for me to have joined you.
We then should have lived the whole of our lives and have died together.
Now I am dead, I am tossed on the waves, at the cruel sea's mercy,
without being properly there. My will would be even more cruel
to me than the cruel sea, if I strove to prolong my life
and struggled to master my grief. That struggle shall never be fought.
I'll never forsake you, my poor dear Ceÿx. At least I can join you
now. We shall be united, if not in an urn, in the letters

engraved on our tomb – not dust touching dust, but name
touching name.'
Sorrow prevented her speaking further. Words were
succeeded
by gestures of mourning and anguished cries from her
broken heart.

Next morning Alcyone left the palace and went to the
seashore.
Sadly she looked for the place from where she had watched
his departure,
and lingered, saying: 'Here he released the ship from its
moorings,
there he gave me his parting kiss.' And while she was
linking
places with actions and gazing over the sea, she sighted
out in the water, away in the distance, an object which
faintly
resembled a body. At first she couldn't be sure what it
was;
but after the waves had washed it a little closer, although
it still was a fair way off, she could see it was clearly a body.
'Some shipwrecked sailor,' she thought to herself – a
disturbing omen.
And then she murmured, as if a stranger were prompting
her tears,
'Poor man, whoever you are! How I pity your wife, if you
have one!'
The waves advanced and the body came nearer. The more
she kept looking,
the more distraught Alcyone grew. It was steadily bobbing
closer and closer to land. It was close enough to be
recognized.
Yes, it was Ceÿx! 'My husband, my husband!' Alcyone
shouted,
tearing her face, her hair and her clothes. Extending her
trembling

hands to the corpse, 'Beloved Ceÿx,' she cried, 'poor soul,
did you need to return to your wife like this?' On the water's edge
was a mole, constructed to break the ocean's initial fury
and weaken the force of the tide before it arrived on the beach.
Alcyone leapt on the groyne – an astonishing feat! She was suddenly
flying on new-found wings through the air and skimming the ocean,
turned to a sorrowing bird. In the course of her flight, she emitted
a querulous, dirge-like croaking noise from her slender beak.
As soon as she reached the silent and bloodless body, she folded
her new wings round the limbs of her loved one and vainly attempted
to kiss his lips; the bill was too hard and the kisses were cold.
People wondered if Ceÿx felt them or merely appeared
to raise his head as it tossed on the waves – but he certainly felt them.
At last the gods took pity and both were changed into birds.
Now that they'd suffered the selfsame fate, their love could continue.
Even today, in their life as birds, their marriage is never
dissolved. They are free to mate and produce their young. Each winter
a week of calmer weather occurs, the halcyon days,
when Alcyone broods on her floating nest on top of the billows.
The waves are perfectly smooth and still; and Aeolus firmly
confines the winds in his cave, to leave the sea to his grandsons.

AESACUS

As the two kingfishers were flying over the sea together,
an old man watched them and praised the love they had
kept to the end.
A friend who was standing nearby – though it might have
been the same person* –
remarked, 'Do you see that other bird skimming the sea,
with his legs
tucked under his wings?' (he was pointing towards a
long-necked diver).
'That bird is of royal descent. If you want to trace the
continuous
line of its pedigree back, its noble forebears included
Ilus, Assáracus, Gánymede stolen away by Jupiter,
old Laömedon, Priam the king whose famous reign
coincided with Troy's last days. Our diver's brother was
Hector.
He himself met a curious fate in his early manhood,
and but for that, his fame might well have equalled his
brother's –
though Hector's mother was Hécuba, Dymas' daughter,
while Aésacus, so they say, was born in secret on shady
Mount Ida to horned Granícus the river-god's child,
Alexírhoë.
Aesacus hated the towns and shunned the glittering
palace
to lead a secluded and unpretentious life in the mountains
and fields. He seldom went into Troy for a public gathering.
Still, he wasn't a country bumpkin. His heart was not
impervious to love. He had often pursued Hespéria,
daughter
of Cebren, another river-god, through the woods of the
region.
One day he sighted her drying her flowing hair in the sun
on her father's banks. As soon as she saw him, the nymph
ran away

like a terrified hind with a tawny wolf on its heels, or a wild duck
fleeing a hawk who's surprised it away from its usual pool.
Aesacus swiftly gave chase, impelled by love as his quarry
was driven by fear. But an adder was lurking there in the grass;
it bit the fugitive's foot* with its fangs and injected its venom.
That was the end of Hesperia's flight and the end of her life.
Aesacus frantically took his beloved's corpse in his arms
as he cried, 'I'm sorry, I'm sorry! I shouldn't have chased you. I never
foresaw such an end. I'd never have paid such a price to outrun you.
Two killers have caused your unhappy death; the snake dealt the wound,
but I was really your murderer. I am the guiltier party.
I have to console you for dying so young by dying myself.'
So speaking, he jumped from a crag which the roaring waves had eroded
below, down into the sea. As he fell, he was gently caught
by pitying Tethys. She covered his body with wings as it floated
over the sea, and didn't allow him the death that he longed for.
The lover was deeply angry at being forced to live on,
and that obstacles had to be thrown in his way when he simply wanted
to die. As soon as his new-given wings had grown on his shoulders,
he dived and flung his body again to the water's surface.

His plumage lightened his fall. Then Aesacus furiously lowered
his head and plunged to the depths. He repeatedly tried to discover
a pathway to death and never stopped trying. His love made him thin,
and all of him lengthened out: his legs on their knotted joints,
his neck with the head so far from the body. He loves the sea,
and because he is constantly diving down it, we call him the diver. 795

BOOK 12

We have reached the Trojan War (from which the mythology of Rome was ultimately derived) in the poem's 'chronological' framework. A brief reference to the abduction of Helen introduces *The Greeks at Aulis* (1–38), in which Ovid makes more of the metamorphosis of an ominous snake than he does of Iphigenia's sacrifice. In anticipation of the Greeks' arrival at Troy, he seizes the opportunity to rival Virgil (*Aeneid* 4.173 ff.) in a brilliant, if gratuitous, description of *Rumour* (39–62). The earliest days of the war at Troy are typified by the unwarlike fight between Achilles and *Cycnus* (64–145), Neptune's son, who cannot be wounded. The great hero's initial lack of success is reminiscent of the similar fiascos in the Calydonian Boar sequence (Book 8, especially 345–79). When Achilles finally does kill Cycnus, his stripping of the body for spoils is apparently aborted by its metamorphosis.

Cycnus' inviolability to wounding is the main topic of conversation in *Achilles' Victory Celebration* (146–88). This leads the aged Nestor on to relate the story of Caeneus, who possessed a similar impregnability and had originally been a woman called *Caenis* (189–209). The sex-change, following on another rape by Neptune, is fairly briefly narrated, before Nestor continues with the book's centrepiece, *The Battle of the Lapiths and Centaurs* (210–535), at the wedding-feast of Pirithoüs and Hippodamia. Ovid now treats us to another mock-epic fight in a banqueting hall, similar to the one at Perseus' wedding (5.1–249), except that fresh scope was doubtless afforded by the half-animal centaurs and their use of the furniture and other unorthodox implements as weapons. As in the earlier fight,

violent incidents follow each other in rapid and vivid succession, only relieved by the little idyll of the young centaur sweethearts, Cyllarus and Hylonome, who are swept up in the brawl. Gory details abound and the tone of the entertainment seems to be pitched at a lower level, perhaps in anticipation of the more sophisticated and subtle fare to follow in the first half of Book 13 (though another view of the burlesque is suggested in the Introduction, p. xxv). The intelligentsia might have been intrigued by the plethora of Greek proper names (twenty-three Lapiths and allies, fifty-five centaurs), many of them made up by Ovid himself (compare Actaeon's dogs in 3.206 ff.) and some with feral or other aggressive resonances. The translation does its best to make clear who are Lapiths and who are centaurs. Metamorphosis is only introduced at the very end when the unwoundable Caeneus (whom we had quite forgotten) returns to the picture to be eventually choked, like Cycnus at 140–45, and also changed to a bird. Nestor ends his lengthy narrative with the story of his brother *Periclymenus* (536–79), whom the power of self-metamorphosis failed to rescue from Hercules' bow.

Back to Cycnus. Neptune engages the help of Apollo, and through him, of Paris, in avenging his son by *The Death of Achilles* (580–628). The book moves rapidly to a conclusion emphasizing the great hero's posthumous fame and setting the scene for *The Judgment of Arms*, with which Ovid is to engage our attention over (very nearly) the next 400 lines.

THE GREEKS AT AULIS

Priam* had no idea that his son had been changed to a bird
and was still alive, so he went into mourning. Aésacus' name
was inscribed on a tomb where Hector offered his funeral gifts –
to no good purpose – along with his brothers. Only Paris
was missing, the prince who later involved his country in war,
long years of war, along with Helen, his stolen bride.*
A confederate fleet of a thousand ships from the whole of Greece
was formed to pursue them; and vengeance would not have been long delayed
if stormy winds hadn't barred the seas and frustratingly stranded
the vessels at Aulis, famous for fish, in the bay of Boeótia.
Here the host of the Greeks had prepared to offer the customary
sacrifices to Jove; the fires on an ancient altar
had duly been lit and the glowing coals were awaiting a victim,
when all of a sudden the people noticed a blue-green serpent
spiralling up a plane tree, close to the sacred precinct.
Right at the top of the tree was a nest which contained eight fledgelings.
These were seized in the serpent's fangs and greedily gulped down,
before it devoured the mother bird as she fluttered around
the chicks she was losing. The crowd was dumbfounded, but Calchas the prophet

unfolded his vision: 'Rejoice, you Greeks! We surely will triumph.
Troy must fall, but our toil shall be long. These nine dead birds
presage nine years of war!' The snake, still coiled in the tree's green
branches, turned into stone in the form of a serpentine sculpture.
The storm continued to rage on the sea in the straits of Euboéa.
The fleet couldn't sail to war. There were some who believed that Neptune
was sparing Troy because he had built the walls of the city.
But not so Calchas the prophet, who knew full well and loudly
proclaimed that the wrath of a virgin goddess* must be appeased
by a virgin's blood. When a father's love for his daughter had yielded
to kingly thought for the public good, and Iphigenía,
surrounded by weeping attendants, was standing in front of the altar
to offer her innocent blood, the goddess was moved to pity
and shrouded the scene in a blanket of mist. As the business proceeded,
amidst the confusion of ritual and voices uplifted in prayer,
the story goes that she substituted a hind for the maiden.
And so Diana was soothed, as required, by a victim's death,
and along with the wrath of the goddess, the wrath of the sea subsided.
The Greeks in their thousand ships set sail with a following wind,
and after all they had suffered arrived on the Trojan beaches.

RUMOUR

Picture a space at the heart of the world, between the earth,
the sea and the sky, on the frontiers of all three parts of the universe.
Here there are eyes for whatever goes on, no matter how distant;
and here there are ears whose hollows no voice can fail to penetrate.
This is the kingdom of Rumour, who chose to live on a mountain,
with numberless entrances into her house and a thousand additional
holes, though none of her thresholds are barred with a gate or a door.
Open by night and by day, constructed entirely of sounding
brass, the whole place hums and echoes, repeating whatever
it hears. Not one of the rooms is silent or quiet, but none
is disturbed by shouting. The noise is merely a murmuring babble,
low like the waves of the sea which you hear from afar, or the last faint
rumble of thunder, when storm-black clouds have clashed in the sky.
The hall is filled by a crowd which is constantly coming and going,
a flimsy throng of a thousand rumours, true and fictitious,
wandering far and wide in a turbulent tangle of language.
They chatter in empty ears or pass on stories to others;
the fiction grows and detail is added by each new teller.
This is the haunt of credulity, irresponsible error,

groundless joy, unreasoning panic, impulsive sedition
and whispering gossip. Rumour herself spies every occurrence
on earth, at sea, in the sky; and her scrutiny ranges the universe.

CYCNUS

Rumour had spread the report in Troy that a fleet was approaching
from Greece with an army on board. So when the expected invaders
arrived, the Trojans were watching the shore to prevent the landing.
The first Greek destined to fall to the spear of the valiant Hector
was Protesiláüs. Battles were fought which cost the Dánaäns
dear, and Hector's courage was known in the deaths he inflicted;
Achaéan might was also attested by Phrygian* losses.
By now the shores of Sigéum were red with blood. By now
the Trojan offspring of Neptune, Cycnus,* had taken a thousand
lives; while Achílles the Greek charged round in his chariot, laying
whole ranks of his enemies low with his spear of ash from Mount Pélion.
Searching the battle lines for either Cycnus or Hector,
he lighted on Cycnus (his duel with Hector was not to take place
for another nine years). At once, with a shout to his white-maned horses,
he steered his chariot straight at his foe and cried, as he powerfully
brandished his weapons, 'Whoever you are, young man, you will have this

consolation in death: you were slain by the mighty Achilles!'
He spoke, and followed his words with a cast of his mighty spear.
The weapon was perfectly aimed, but the aim was perfectly useless.
The point was blunted and merely succeeded in bruising its target's
chest. 'Son of Thetis,' Cycnus replied, 'yes, rumour has told me
all about you. Why be so surprised that I haven't been wounded?'
(Achilles was certainly looking surprised.) 'This helmet with chestnut
horsehair plumes and the shield you can see on my left arm offer me
no protection at all. I wear them purely for show –
just as Mars the war god is dressed for show. You can take every piece
of my armour away, but I'll leave without the slightest of scratches.
I'm not the son of a Nereïd. No, I'm the son of the god
who is lord of the sea and of Néreus and all the daughters of Nereus!'
So speaking, he flung his spear, but it only lodged in Achilles'
shield, where it pierced the cover of bronze and the layers of oxhide,
nine of them, lying behind, to be finally stopped by the tenth.
It was shaken off by the hero, who hurled a second quivering
weapon with all the strength of his arm; but his target remained
unwounded and whole. A third attempt was no more successful;
though Cycnus presented his body unguarded, it bore not a scratch.

Achilles exploded with rage, like a bull in an open arena,
which savagely charges the scarlet cloak held up to provoke him
but finds he has dealt no wound and his dangerous horns have been thwarted.
He wondered whether the tip of his weapon had fallen off,
but no, it was fixed to the shaft. Then he asked, 'Has my arm gone feeble
and wasted all of its earlier strength on a single opponent?
It must have been strong when I led the attack on Lyrnéssus' walls,
when I washed Eëtion's city of Thebae and Ténedos island
in blood, when the Mýsian river Caïcus was red with the slaughter
of all its people, when Télephus twice was touched by my spear.*
Here also in Troy, when I look at the piles of corpses I've scattered
along the shore, I can see that my hand has been strong and remains so.'
Such were his thoughts when, as though he mistrusted his former achievements,
he flung his spear at a Lycian, Menoétes, advancing towards him,
and pierced the warrior's corselet through to the breast it protected.
As soon as his dying victim struck the ground with his head,
Achilles extracted the spear, still warm, from the wound and he cried out,
'This is the hand and this is the spear which have won me my victory;
now I shall use them on *him*, and I pray for a victory as certain!'
So speaking, he aimed at Cycnus again. The ash spear travelled
straight to its mark and struck with a clang on the man's left shoulder,

then bounced right off, as it might from a wall or a
mountain cliff.
Yet Achilles observed that the place where Cycnus had
taken the impact
was stained in blood, and he crowed in delight. But his
joy was unfounded,
he hadn't inflicted a wound; the blood had come from
Menoetes.
Yelling with rage and frustration, he bounded down
from his chariot,
drawing his glittering sword to attack his
imperturbable
foe at close quarters. He found that his weapon was
easily denting
the helmet and shield, but was damaged itself when
struck on the body.
This was the limit. He lowered his shield to his side to
come closer,
and used his sword-hilt to hammer his enemy full in
the face
and the forehead, again and again. As Cycnus
retreated, Achilles
followed, maintaining the pressure: he hassled and
rushed him; he left
his bewildered opponent no peace. The Trojan started
to panic;
dark shadows were floating in front of his eyes. Then
while he was moving
backwards across the plain, his steps were checked by
a rock.
Achilles thrust him down on his back right over the
boulder,
violently twisted him round and dashed him on to the
earth.
Then pressing his shield with his knees hard down on
his victim's ribs,
he pulled on the thongs of his helmet and tightened
them under his chin

till the man was throttled and beaten at last. As Achilles got ready
to strip the corpse, he saw that the armour was empty. Neptune
had changed his son to the white-plumed bird called cycnus, the swan.

ACHILLES' VICTORY CELEBRATION

This strenuous fight led on to a truce which lasted for several
days, when weapons were laid aside and the war was suspended;
the Trojans patrolled their walls, while the Greeks kept watch on their earthworks.
There came a festival day when the duel's victor, Achilles,
was wooing Athena's* favour by sacrificing a heifer.
After the victim's entrails were laid on the altar flames
and the smell so welcome to heaven had wafted upwards, the gods
received their share of the meat and the rest was assigned to the banquet.
The chiefs reclined on their couches and gorged themselves on the roasted
flesh, with wine to relieve their cares no less than their thirst.
They didn't rely for their entertainment on singing and music
performed on the lyre or the multiple stops of the boxwood pipe.
The night was spun out in serious talk, and the principal topic
was manly courage. They described their battles, their own and the enemy's,
taking turns to recite the dangers they'd faced and surmounted,
many times over. What else would Achilles choose to expand on,

and what would others prefer to discuss in his glorious presence?
The conversation centred, of course, on Achilles' recent success in vanquishing Cycnus. Everyone found it amazing
that someone should have a body that spears could never transfix,
that made swords blunt and couldn't be overpowered by wounding.
None of the Greeks, not Achilles himself, could solve the mystery,
when Nestor commented: 'Yes,' he said, 'in your generation
Cycnus was surely unique in despising swords and possessing
a body no spear could wound. But I, long ago, saw a person
who suffered a thousand cuts unscathed. His name was Caéneus,
Perrhaébian Caeneus, whose early home was Thessálian Óthrys.
His exploits won him renown, the more surprisingly so as he started life as a woman.'* Nestor's novel pronouncement
prompted a call from the company, voiced by Achilles, for details:
'Out with the story, old Nestor! We're all of us eager to hear it;
and you are the wisest man of our time, with a talent for speaking.
Now tell us who Caeneus was. And why did he change his sex?
On what campaign did you get to know him? Whom was he fighting?
And who in the world, if anyone, finally proved his undoing?'
Nestor replied: 'Old age has slowed my memory down,

and there's much that I saw in my youngest days that I've now forgotten.
But still I remember more, and there's nothing engraved on my mind
more strongly than this particular story. I've done many things,
both in war and in peace; and if anyone had the good fortune to witness
plenty of gallant action because of prolonged old age –
well, I've lived a couple of centuries and now am into my third.

CAENIS

'Caenis, Élatus' daughter, was highly renowned for her beauty.
Of all the maidens in Thessaly she was the fairest, and courted
in vain by a wealth of suitors from all the neighbouring cities,
and yours, Achilles, as well (her home was likewise in Phthia).
Even your father, Péleus, might well have offered his hand
if he hadn't already been married – or firmly engaged, perhaps –
to Thetis, your mother. But Caenis accepted none of her suitors.
One day she was strolling along a secluded beach on her own,
when, according to rumour's report, she was raped by the god of the sea.
As Neptune savoured the joy of his latest conquest, he said,
'I'll allow you to ask for a gift which I promise not to refuse you.
Now choose what you want to ask me!' (so the rumour continued).

Caenis replied, 'The wrong you have done me is great, so I'll ask you
the greatest of favours I can: let me never be able to suffer
such wrong again. If you will make me a woman no more,
your promise will be fulfilled.' She delivered those final words
in a lower voice, and they might have appeared to come from a man –
as they surely did. The god of the sea had already granted
Caenis' request and had also bestowed an additional power:
the new male body could never be wounded or fall at a sword's point.
Caeneus departed, well pleased with the gift, and devoted his life
to manly pursuits as he roamed the fields by the river Penéüs.

THE BATTLE OF THE LAPITHS AND CENTAURS

'Piríthoüs, son of Ixíon and king of the Lapiths,
had married Hippodamía. He invited the cloud-born centaurs*
to join the banquet at tables arranged in a leafy glen.
The chieftains of Thessaly came; I, Nestor, also attended.
The palace was filled with the festive hubbub of thronging guests.
Now hark to the wedding-hymn! Torches and rising smoke in the great hall!
Enter the bride, escorted by matrons and younger women,

and looking a picture. We all declared how blessed Pirithoüs
was in his beautiful wife. But our praise's effect as a lucky
omen was almost undone, when the wildest of all the wild
centaurs,
Eúrytus, drunk already, was further inflamed by the sight
of the bride, and the power of wine reinforced by desire
took over.
Tables were upside down in a flash, the feast was reduced
to a shambles, as Eurytus seized Pirithoüs' newly-wed bride
by the hair and forced her away, while each of the other
centaurs
grabbed any woman he fancied or found. The chaos
resembled
a captured city, and women were screaming all over the
palace.
We quickly rose from our couches. 'Eurytus!' shouted
Théseus,
taking the lead, 'you must be crazy! How dare you provoke
Pirithoüs while *I* live and foolishly injure us both?'*
The centaur said nothing – he couldn't defend his
outrageous behaviour
by words – but used his unruly fists to punch the prince
on the jaw and to pummel his chest. On a table nearby
there chanced
to be lying an antique wine-bowl, richly embossed with
figures
in high relief. The bowl was huge, but Theseus was huger;
he lifted it up and hurled it directly in Eurytus' face.
As globules of blood and fragments of brain poured out of
the wound,
the centaur, vomiting wine from his mouth, fell backwards
and drummed
with his heels on the sodden sand. His brothers, enraged by
the carnage,
vied with each other in shouting as one, 'To arms, to arms!'
Inspired by the wine with courage, they started the battle by
sending

their goblets flying, then breakable jars and round-lipped vessels,
objects intended for feasts, now used for war and for slaughter.
'Ámycus, son of Ophíon, was first among the rampaging
centaurs to raid the inner rooms of the palace and plunder
an iron stand which supported a cluster of burning candles.
He lifted the whole thing high, like a priest at a sacrifice straining
to raise the axe which will cleave the neck of a pure white bull,
then dashed it down on the forehead of Céladon, one of the Lapiths.
This fractured his skull and mangled his face past all recognition.
His eyes burst out of their sockets, the bones of his cheeks were shattered,
the nose smashed inwards and jammed beneath the roof of his mouth.
But another Lapith called Pélates wrenched the leg from a maplewood
table and used it to hammer Amycus down to the ground,
with his chin forced into his chest. As the centaur sputtered his teeth out
mingled with gore, a second blow dispatched him to Hades.
'Next to the fore came Grýneus, who'd stood there, grimly inspecting
the smoking altar and said, "Why don't we make use of this?"
With a frightening glare in his eyes, he lifted the hefty structure,
fires and all, and hurled it into a group of the Lapiths.

Two were crushed by the mountainous weight, Bróteas and Oríos
(Orios' mother was Mýcale, said to have often succeeded
in drawing down the horns of the moon with her incantations).
"You won't get away with this, if I can get hold of a weapon!"
Exádius said, and then caught sight of some antlers nailed
to a tall pine tree as a votive offering. There was his weapon!
Armed with the horns of a stag, Exadius aimed for the centaur's
eyeballs and gouged them out. One eye stuck fast on the antlers,
and one rolled down on to Gryneus' beard, blood-coated, and clung there.
'There was Rhoétus, another centaur, snatching a blazing
plum-wood brand from the altar and next attacking Charáxus
to fracture his brow from the right. It was covered with golden curls,
and the hair caught fire in an instant, like crops in a dry cornfield.
The blood which flowed from the scorching wound made a terrible sizzling
noise like the sound of a red-hot bar of iron, when a blacksmith
draws it with tongs from the furnace and plunges it into his trough:
the metal sizzles and hisses when dipped in the cooling water.
The wounded Lapith shook out the greedy fire from his curly
hair and, tearing a slab from the threshold floor, he lifted it
on to his shoulders. The mass was too heavy to reach the centaur

(it weighed enough to be drawn by a cart); it landed instead
on Cométes, a friend who was standing closer at hand, and it crushed him.
Rhoetus couldn't contain his joy, and shouting, "May all
the rest of your crew be as brave!" he returned with his half-burnt torch
to the wound he had started. With heavy, repeated blows, he battered
Charaxus' skull, till bone and brains were reduced to a pulp.
'The victorious Rhoetus next attacked Euágrus, Dryas
and Córythus, only a youth with the first fine hairs on his chin.
When Corythus fell to the ground, Euagrus cried to the centaur,
"What glory is there in killing a boy?" The great brute wouldn't
allow him to speak any further and savagely thrust his flaming
torch in Euagrus' open mouth and forced it right down into his gullet. He then went after the furious Dryas,
whirling the brand round his head. This time he was less successful.
There he was, gloating over all the Lapiths he'd slaughtered,
when Dryas pierced him where shoulder meets neck, with the point of a charred stake.
Roaring, the centaur painfully wrenched the implement out
from where it was lodged in the bone, and fled, now soaked in his own blood.
Ornéüs and Lýcabas followed him; Medon, gashed in his strong right
shoulder, Pisénor and Thaumas; Mérmerus too, who had lately

outstripped his brothers in running but, since he'd been wounded, was only
able to limp. Pholus and Mélaneus joined in the rout,
with Abas, the hunter of bears, and Ásbolus, a prophet who'd vainly
tried to dissuade the others from fighting. When Nessus was also
fleeing in terror, Asbolus shouted out to him, saying,
"*You* needn't run! You are being reserved for Hercules' bow."*
However, Eurýnomus, Lýcidas, Ímbreus along with Aréüs
failed to escape from death. They were all confronted by Dryas
and felled to the ground. Crenaéus was also struck in the face,
although he had turned in flight. As he glanced behind him, a javelin
caught him between the eyes where the nose grows out of the forehead.
'In the midst of all this confusion Aphídas, a centaur, was lying
completely befuddled with wine, flat out, with his sleep unbroken,
still holding his cup in his drooping hand and sprawled on the shaggy
skin of a mountain bear. When Phorbas, a Lapith, observed him
across the hall, immobile and taking no part in the battle,
he slipped his fingers inside the thong of his ash spear, crying,
"Now you must mix your wine with Stygian water!" then instantly
hurled his javelin towards the youth; and the iron-tipped weapon
transfixed his neck as he happened to lie with his head thrown back.
Aphidas died feeling nothing. The dark blood welled from his throat

and spilled all over the couch and even into his goblet.
'I, Nestor, noticed Petraéus, another centaur, trying
to lift an oak from the earth. While his arms were clasping it tightly,
shaking it this way and that, and the roots were beginning to loosen,
Pirithoüs cast his spear, which entered Petraeus' ribcage,
passed through his straining chest and nailed him fast to the hard trunk.
They say it was due to Pirithoüs' courage that Lycus and Chromis
fell to the earth. But neither brought their conqueror greater
glory than Dictys and Helops. The latter was killed by a javelin
thrown from the right, which pierced his temples through to the left ear.
Dictys was fleeing the son of Ixion's pursuit in a panic
and slipped from a mountain ridge, to tumble headlong and shatter
a massive ash tree below, where his groin was impaled on the splinters.
'Áphareus rushed to avenge him and, tearing a rock from the mountain,
attempted to throw it. But Theseus forestalled him in the attempt
by wielding an oak-wood cudgel to break the bones of his massive
forearm. This put Aphareus out of action, and Theseus
lacked the time or the inclination to finish him off.
Instead he leapt on the back of the towering centaur Biënor,
who'd never accepted a rider before but himself. Then digging
his knees in the flanks of his mount, he gripped the curls of Biënor's
hair with his left hand, forced the head back, lifted his knotted

club, and battered the centaur's face on the bony temples
and slaughter-threatening lips. Brave Theseus also
succeeded
in knocking over Nedýmnus, the javelin-thrower Lycópes,
and Hippasus, whose broad torso was veiled by his long
beard; Rípheus,
taller than all the trees, and Théreus, trapper of bears,
who transported them home from Thessaly's mountains,
alive and angry.
'Theseus' successes in fighting could not be further
endured
by the centaur Demóleon. Racing across to an age-old
pine,
he strained very hard to uproot it with trunk intact, but he
failed;
so he broke it off near the roots and flung it against his foe.
As it hurtled towards him, Theseus retreated well out of
range –
on Pallas Athena's prompting, or so he would have us
believe.
But the pine didn't fall before it had done some damage; it
severed
the breast and his strong left shoulder away from the neck
of the tall
Dolópian Crantor, your father's armour-bearer, Achilles;
(his king Amýntor, defeated in war, had handed him over
to Aéacus' son as a token and pledge of the peace between
them).
When Peleus saw from a distance that Crantor was foully
dismembered,
he cried out, "Dearest of henchmen, at least I can pay you a
funeral
tribute." His muscular arm then launched his javelin of
ashwood
straight at the centaur with all the strength of his body
behind it.
The weapon ruptured its target's ribcage and quivered,
lodged

in the bones. Demoleon managed to draw the shaft from his body –
though that came slowly enough – but the tip was trapped in his lung.
The pain inspired him with courage. Despite his faintness, he straightened
his body and kicked right out at his foe with his horse's hooves.
Peleus took the clattering blows on his shield and helmet;
then, guarding his shoulders by holding his weapons well forward, he pierced
the brute's double torso, horse's and man's, with a single thrust.
'Peleus had earlier killed Phlegraéus and Hyles at long range;
Iphínoüs perished in hand-to-hand combat, and likewise Clanis.
Dórylas made one more, who was wearing a wolfskin cap
on his head and whose hand wasn't armed with a pointed spear but a splendid
bracket of crooked-in bull's horns, richly reddened with blood.
Here *I* was involved as I plucked up courage to shout to the centaur,
"Here now, see what your horns can do to counter my steel!"
and I threw my javelin. He couldn't avoid it and lifted his right hand
up to his brow for protection. His hand was pinned to his forehead.
A roar went up from the crowd and, as Dorylas helplessly stood there,
stunned by the pain of his injury, Peleus, who was standing
nearby, came forward and thrust his sword right under the belly.

The centaur then bounded forward, trailing his guts on the ground;
as he trailed them, he trampled them under his hooves; what he trampled he burst,
till he caught his legs in the sludge and fell with his abdomen emptied.
'How about Cýllarus? He was a beauty, if centaurs can ever
be called good-looking. But Cyllarus' looks couldn't save him in battle.
His beard was just starting to grow, in a golden colour, gold
as the golden mane which streamed from his shoulders down to his withers.
His face was handsome and strong. His neck and his shoulders, his hands
and his torso – all indeed of his human features – were like
the work of a famous sculptor. His horse's parts lower down
were no less perfect, unblemished. A mount for Castor, if given
a head and a neck! Such a ridable back, such a muscular chest!
He was blacker than pitch all over, except for his legs and his tail
which were white. Many female centaurs pursued him, but only Hylónome,
fairest of all her kind to inhabit the forest, succeeded.
Cyllarus hers alone! She held him by sweet endearments,
by loving and saying she loved him, by making herself look attractive
as far as a centaur can. She'd smooth her hair with a comb
and entwine it with garlands of rosemary, violets or roses, and sometimes
with pure white lilies. Twice every day she would wash her face
in a spring which cascaded down from the heights of Págasae's woods

and twice a day she would bathe in the river. She'd only drape
her shoulder and side with animal fleeces which specially suited her.
The lovers adored each other alike. They'd roam the mountains
or rest in caves together. On this occasion they'd entered
the hall of the Lapiths and joined in the fight at each other's side.
Cast by a person unknown, a spear flew in from the left,
and wounded Cyllarus just below the top of his chest.
The heart had only been slightly injured, but after the weapon
was pulled from his body, both heart and body went totally cold.
Hylonome hurried to catch her expiring love as he fell;
resting her hand on the wound, she soothed it; and pressing her lips
on his, she tried to prevent the escape of his fleeting breath.
When she saw he was dead, she spoke a few words which the noise of battle
prevented my hearing, before she fell on the spear that had wounded
her partner, and died as she held him close in her arms for the last time.
'Another centaur I see in my mind had his horse's and human
parts protected alike by a blanket fashioned of lion skins,
six of them, fastened together by knots. His name was Phaeócomes.
Hurling a log which a pair of ox-teams could barely have shifted,
he cracked the head of Téctaphus, Ólenus' son, on the crown.

Then, while he was trying to strip the arms from his prostrate victim,
I, Nestor – as Peleus your father, Achilles, will surely confirm –
I plunged my blade in the spoiler's side. Old Chthónius too
and Teléboäs fell to my sword. The former was wielding a forked branch,
the other a spear, with which he actually gave me a wound.
You can see the mark of it here, in the scar still showing from that time –
the time in my life when I ought to have come to the siege of Troy!*
That was the time when I might have checked, if I couldn't have beaten,
the mighty Hector in battle. But Hector hadn't been born yet,
or else he was only a boy; and now I'm too ancient to fight him.
'No need to mention how Périphas mastered the centaur Pyraéthus,
or tell the story of Ampyx, who managed to drive his unpointed
cornel spear right into the face of four-footed Echéclus.
Mácareus killed Erigdúpus, who came from the vale of Peláthron,
by ramming a crowbar into his chest. I also remember
a hunting-spear flung by Nessus which lodged in the groin of Cymélus.
You'd never suppose from what happened that Mopsus,* Ámpycus' son,
was merely a prophet. When Mopsus speared the centaur Hodítes,
his victim fell to the ground and vainly attempted to utter
some words, but his tongue had been pinned to his chin and his chin to his throat.

'How about Caeneus? He killed five centaurs: Antímachus, Stýphelus,

Élymus, Bromus and lastly Pyrácmus, who fought with an axe.
(I can't remember their wounds, but only their names and the number.)
Then Látreus, a centaur of massive physique, rushed forward to face him,
armed with the spoils of Halésus, a Macedonian he'd slaughtered.
In age he was past his youth and his temples were flecked with grey,
but his strength was still a young man's. His helmet, shield and exotic
pike attracted all eyes as he proudly turned to each army,
brandished his weapons and pranced around in a well-traced circle,
flinging a torrent of insolent taunts in the empty air:
"Caenis, you bitch! Must I tolerate *you*? You will always be female
and Caenis to *me*. Perhaps you forget your original sex.
Do you ever recall what you did to deserve your reward? Do you think
of the price which you paid to achieve this specious masculine body?
Look at the girl you were born and the shame that she suffered. Then go,
return to your distaff and basket of wool. Go back to your spinning,
and leave the fighting to *men*!" As Latreus was galloping past him,
shouting these insults, Caeneus let fly with his spear, which made a great
gash in the mocker's side where man and horse are united.
Maddened by pain, the centaur cast at the hero's uncovered

head with his pike. The weapon rebounded like hail off a rooftop
or pebbles dropped on a drum. Then Latreus attacked at close quarters
and struggled to bury his sword in the young man's side, but the side
was too hard; there was no way in. "You won't escape me," he shouted.
"You'll die on the edge of my sword, since the point's been blunted!" So turning
his weapon sideways, he reached to slash him around his thighs,
but the blow produced no more than a thud – the flesh might well have been
marble. The metal was broken to splinters on striking such tough skin.
Caeneus was tired of exposing his still unwounded limbs
to the stupefied centaur. "Come on!" he said to him, "now let's see
how your body responds to *my* steel"; and he plunged his death-dealing sword
right up to the hilt in his enemy's trunk and compounded the damage
by turning and twisting the sunken blade right into his vitals.
On came the centaurs, shouting and yelling, rushing in frenzy,
everyone hurling or thrusting their weapons against one foe.
Those weapons were blunted and fell to the ground, while Caeneus remained
unscathed by all of their blows; not a drop of his blood had been spilt.
'This turn of events left the centaurs dumbfounded. "Shameful, disgraceful!"
Mónychus cried. "Our whole tribe worsted by one man, hardly

a man at that! No, *he* is a man and we are behaving
as feebly as women. What use is this massive girth of
our bodies?
What of our double strength? Has nature combined in
ourselves
the courage and force of the world's two mightiest
creatures for nothing?
Our mother a goddess? I don't believe it. Our father
cannot
have been Ixion, a mortal with pride enough to aspire
to sleep with Juno on high, when *we* are defeated by
someone
whose sex is in doubt! Let us roll the boulders, the
trees, whole mountains
on top of this upstart. Let's hurl the forests and crush
the life
from his living body. His throat will be choked by the
bulk of it all,
and the weight will prove as good as a wound." So
saying, he seized
a trunk knocked down, as it chanced, by the south
wind's fury, and threw it
against his unwoundable foe. The rest did the same; in
a short while
Othrys was stripped of its trees and Pelion empty of
shade.
Crushed beneath that enormous layer, the hero
sweltered
under the weight of the trees, and heaved with his
sturdy shoulders
to raise the pile, but after the load grew greater and
greater
over his head and he couldn't breathe through his
mouth any longer,
consciousness left him. But then he recovered and
vainly attempted
to roll the trees off his body and lift himself up to
obtain

some air. For a while he succeeded in moving the surface, as if
Mount Ida,* which look! we can see over there, was disturbed by an earthquake.
No one is certain what happened next. Some said that his body
was thrust right down by the mass of the trees to the shadows of Hades.
Mopsus the seer said no. He'd noticed a rust-winged bird*
emerging out of the pile and soaring into the air.
I also sighted the bird that day for the first and the last time.
Mopsus watched it gently circling the camp and he heard it
loudly clapping its wings. As he thoughtfully followed it round
with his eyes, he exclaimed, 'All hail! Hail Caeneus, pride of the Lapiths,
once unique among men, and now sole bird of your kind!"
The prophet said it and we believed it. Grief made our anger
all the more bitter. That one man's life should be crushed by so many!
To vent our sorrow, we turned on the centaurs and didn't cease fighting
till most had been killed and the rest were in rout or were rescued by night.'

PERICLYMENUS

As Nestor described the battle between the Lapiths and centaurs,
Tlepólemus, Hercules' son, was deeply distressed that his father
had not been mentioned* and couldn't contain his resentment in silence.
'Sir Nestor,' he cried, 'I'm amazed that you have forgotten Hercules'

glorious exploits. I'm sure that my father frequently told me
the centaurs were conquered by *him*.' Old Nestor ruefully answered him:
'Why must you force me now to remember wrongs and reopen
sorrows that time has healed? Do I need to explain the reasons
which led me to hate your father? His deeds, heaven knows, surpassed
belief and the world must acknowledge the good that he did – though I'd rather
be able myself to deny it. My praises haven't included
Deíphobus or Pulýdamas, even Hector, for nobody
praises his foes. Your illustrious father had razed the walls
of Messéne, and next he destroyed the innocent cities of Elis
and Pylos, where my palace was ravaged by fire and sword.
Of the many he slaughtered I'll only refer to the sons of Néleus,
twelve of us then, and we made a splendid group of young warriors.
Hercules killed all twelve, with the sole exception of me.
I had to accept the death of my other brothers, but one strange
death stands out, Periclýmenus'. Neptune, the founder of Neleus'
line, had invested this youth with the power of adopting whatever
shape he desired and of changing back to his normal form.
At Hercules' coming, he'd run the gamut of metamorphosis
without the slightest effect, till he changed to the form of the bird,

so dear to the king of the gods, which transports his bolts in its talons.
Using his eagle's strength, Periclymenus tore at Hercules'
face with his flapping wings, hooked beak and his sharp curved claws.
The hero from Tiryns then bent his all-too-unerring bow
against the creature and, while it was hovering high in the clouds,
an arrow entered its breast quite close to one of its wings.
The wound was not very deep, but the sinews torn on that side
could serve it no longer, all movement and flying power were lost.
The eagle fell to the earth, as its weakened wings could no longer
catch the air to support them; and where the arrow had lightly
lodged in the wing, it was forced by the weight of the crashing body
through to the top of the breast and out by the neck on the left side.
Now, Tlepolemus, handsome chief of the Rhodian fleet,
do you really believe that I owe your father a public eulogy?
Nevertheless, my silence about his exploits completes
the vengeance I owe my brothers; my friendship with *you* is unbroken.'
So Nélean Nestor charmingly answered Hercules' son.
When the old man's story was finished, the wine went round once again,
and everyone rose from their couches to sleep for the rest of the night.

THE DEATH OF ACHILLES

But the god who rules the waves with his trident grieved as a father
for Cycnus, the son whose body he'd changed to a swan like Pháëthon's
friend.* He detested the cruel Achilles so much that he crossed
the bounds of civilized conduct to vent his implacable anger.
The war against Troy had now dragged on for about ten years,
when Neptune strongly appealed to his long-haired Sminthian* nephew:
'Apollo, the one of my brother Jupiter's sons whom I love
the best, who joined me in building the walls of Troy unrewarded,*
do you heave a sigh when you look at these towers, so soon to fall?
Do you rue the slaughter of so many thousands defending the city?
Not to mention each one, are you haunted at least by the ghost
of Hector, whose body was dragged* all round the stronghold he fought for?
Meanwhile that monster Achilles, a man more blood-polluted
than war itself, lives on to ravage the work of our hands.
Let him come my way: I'll ensure that he feels the power of my trident.
But since I may not engage with my foe directly,* I ask you
to shoot an invisible arrow to catch the brute unawares.'

Apollo agreed; his wishes exactly accorded with Neptune's.*
Hiding his presence in cloud, he came to the Trojan lines,
and there in the midst of the general carnage he noticed Paris
shooting away in desultory fashion at common Greek soldiers.
The god revealed who he was and said to him, 'Why are you wasting
your shafts on the rank and file? If you care at all for your family,
target Achilles and take revenge for your slaughtered brethren.'
So saying, he pointed the hero out, still hacking the Trojans
down; then turning Paris' bow in the same direction
he guided an arrow with deadly aim at Achilles' heel.
If Priam, after the death of Hector, had cause for rejoicing,
this surely was it. So Achilles who'd vanquished the mightiest heroes
was vanquished himself by a coward who'd stolen the wife of his Greek host.
If he was destined to die at the hands of a woman in war,
he'd rather have been cut down by the axe of Penthesilea.*

Now the terror of all the Trojans, the pride and bulwark
of Greece's name, Achilles the hero unequalled in battle,
had ended in flames.* Vulcan, the god who had forged his armour,
had fired his body to ashes; all that remained of Achilles
the great was a small amount of material, barely sufficient
to fill an urn. But his fame lives on to fill the expanse
of the whole wide world. His glory measures up to the man;
it matches his noble self, untouched by shadowy Hades.
Even the shield of Achilles proclaimed the hero who'd owned it.
It prompted a conflict, and arms were taken up for his arms.

None of the others ventured to claim them – not
Diomédes,
Ajax, the son of Oéleus, not Meneláüs, not even
his elder and far more valiant brother, King
Agamémnon.
Only Ulýsses and Ajax, the son of Télamon, reckoned
their prowess was such as to merit a prize so very
625 prestigious.
To avoid the invidious task of deciding between them
himself,
Agamemnon summoned the Argive chiefs to a court in
the heart
of the camp, and referred the dispute to the judgment
of all in the session.

BOOK 13

This is the longest book in *The Metamorphoses* – striking, as always, for its internal variety and for its wide range of literary associations with the different genres of epic, tragic and pastoral poetry. Those who enjoy the game will find thematic links between some of the stories. Long speeches, mostly of persuasion or appeal, are a unifying feature.

The Judgment of Arms (1–381) is a formal debate between the heroes Ajax and Ulysses, each of whom is claiming the divinely-made arms of the dead Achilles. The two speakers – the brave but stolid-minded warrior, Ajax, and the wily tactician, Ulysses – are skilfully characterized and contrasted. Note that Ajax unwisely addresses himself to the crowd of onlookers, while Ulysses argues his case directly to the chieftains who have been asked to decide the issue. Although the speeches contain a strong flavour of the rhetorical exercises set to young Romans in their educational curriculum, both will strike the modern reader as vital and entertaining. In the subject-matter Ovid traverses much of the ground covered in Homer's *Iliad*, and in post-Homeric poems of the seventh and sixth centuries BC, known as the Epic Cycle, about the fall of Troy. His audience would have appreciated the way in which he makes each of his two contestants distort some of the familiar detail in his own favour. After Ulysses has won, we have *Ajax's Suicide* (382–98), where Ovid refrains from alluding to the terrible madness which lies at the core of Sophocles' tragedy *Ajax*. The hero's suicide is contrived to lead up to a metamorphosis linking his death, not very appropriately, with that of Apollo's boy-friend, Hyacinthus (10.162–219).

The substance and tone of Euripides' tragedies, however, are strongly recalled in *The Fall of Troy* (398b–428) and *The Sufferings of Hecuba* (429–575). In the former we will find no reference to the famous Wooden Horse – Virgil had done that too well in *Aeneid* 2. The latter is based remarkably closely on Euripides' *Hecuba*, with its double plot which shows the Trojan queen facing and responding to the deaths of her daughter Polyxena and her youngest son Polydorus. The episode includes some fine speeches for the princess Polyxena confronting sacrifice to Achilles' ghost and for the old queen herself as she laments her daughter's and her own fate. In its conclusion, Ovid inevitably draws on the strange tradition that the grief-stricken Hecuba was ultimately transformed to a howling dog.

The tone grows less intense in the last Trojan story, of the dawn goddess Aurora's dead son, *Memnon* (576–622), whose ashes take the form of two bird armies as they rise from his funeral pyre. We pass on quickly to *The Wanderings of Aeneas* (1) (623a–31, 705–39), where Ovid does move into Virgilian territory. His 'little *Aeneid*' provides a framework for the metamorphoses which follow, as for the death of Aeneas in 14.581–607; and it leads after that into the mythology of Rome itself. When the Trojans reach Delos, Ovid works in the change-stories of *The Daughters of Anius* (632–74) and *The Daughters of Orion* (675–704), both fairly low-key episodes; but the book achieves a superb lift when the wanderers' voyage brings them to Sicily. There the myth of Scylla (in her pre-monster days) incorporates *Acis, Galatea and Polyphemus* (740–897), a favourite story chiefly familiar from the Greek pastoral poet Theocritus (third century BC). The song of the wild and hairy Cyclops wooing the nymph Galatea is another high-spot of the poem. In conclusion, we have the first part of *Glaucus and Scylla* (898–967), in which another girl is unsuccessfully appealed to at length by the merman who was formerly a mortal youth.

THE JUDGMENT OF ARMS

The chieftains had taken their seats. A crowd gathered round in a ring,
and they were the audience that Ajax, lord of the sevenfold shield,*
stood up to address. Unable, as usual, to govern his temper,
he grimly surveyed the ships along the shore of Sigéum,
then with a gesture towards them, he said: 'In the name of Jupiter,
here are the two of us putting our case in front of those vessels,*
and I, great Ajax, am asked to compare myself with Ulýsses!
He beat a hasty retreat* when Hector attacked with his torches,
while I stood my ground and saved the fleet by routing the foe.
It's safer, it seems, to fight with lies and ingenious talk
than engage in arms like a man. But speaking isn't my chief strength,
as action is not my opponent's. My power in the fury of battle
is matched by his skill in debate. No need, I think, to recite
my actions to you, my Argive friends, as you saw them yourselves.
Ulysses may tell you his own, the actions for which he cannot
produce one witness, the actions which only the night is aware of.
The prize that I seek is a great one, I freely admit. But my rival
detracts from its value. It isn't an honour for Ajax to win
whatever Ulysses has hoped to achieve, no matter how splendid.
Ulysses has won a prize as it is: when he loses this match,

he'll be sure of the glory of having competed with Ajax,
with me!
'What's more, if anyone chose to question the valour
of Ajax,
my noble birth would give me the edge. My father was
Télamon,
hero who captured the walls of Troy when the valiant
Hercules
led the attack, and joined the Argonauts sailing to
Colchis.
His father was Aéacus, now a judge of the spirits in
Hades,
where shifty Sísyphus strains against the weight of his
rock.
King Jupiter frankly acknowledges Aeacus' place as a
son
of his own; so Ajax is third in line of descent from
Jove.
However, my ancestry shouldn't be used as a point in
my favour,
unless I share it with great Achilles. He was my cousin,
and I am demanding my cousin's arms. As Sisyphus'
scion,*
Ulysses, and equal in fraud and deceit, are you trying to
graft
the name of an alien line on Aeacus' family tree?
'Must the arms be denied to me because I entered the
war
before my opponent and wasn't enrolled by a sneaking
informer?*
Should *he* be accorded the prior claim when he joined
up last,
when he tried to escape from military service by feigning
madness,
until another more crafty fellow – although he was
doing
himself no good – Palamédes, exposed his cowardly
fiction

and dragged him along to the expedition he'd sought to
avoid?
Is he to take the best arms, because he refused to take up
any? Am I to be slighted, deprived of the prize which
belonged
to my cousin, since I was first to throw myself into danger?
'I wish, indeed, that Ulysses' madness had either been real
or believed to be real. I wish that this instigator of crime
had never accompanied us to the fortress of Troy. If so,
Philoctétes* would not be marooned on Lemnos to our
discredit,
hidden, they say, in tree-covered caves, disturbing the
rocks
with his groans and raining curses on vile Ulysses, curses
richly deserved, which must be fulfilled if the gods exist.
And now that hero, who took the same oath of alliance as
we did,
one of our captains, to whom the dying Hercules handed
his bow, is broken by sickness, starving, clothed and fed
by the birds which he kills with arrows that ought to be
killing the Trojans.
But still, Philoctetes lives, since he did not go with Ulysses
to Troy, while poor Palamedes would rather have been
abandoned.
He was the man who'd exposed my opponent's pretended
madness
and had to pay. Ulysses remembered it all too well.
He falsely accused Palamedes of treason against the Greeks.
What evidence did he produce? It was gold he had buried
beforehand.
This shows how Ulysses has sapped our strength by exile
or murder.
That's how he fights and that is the kind of fear he inspires.
'Ulysses' eloquence may surpass even trusty Nestor's,
but that will never induce me to think his desertion of
Nestor*
was other than shamefully wrong. The tired old man was in
trouble

because his horse had been wounded. He cried to Ulysses for help,
but his comrade betrayed him. Ulysses' friend Diomédes can vouch
that I'm not making this up, as he shouted Ulysses' name
again and again and castigated his cowardly flight.
But the gods survey the actions of mortals with eyes of justice.
Ulysses was later in need of the help* which he'd failed to supply;
in abandoning Nestor, he'd shown how he himself should be treated.
He yelled for his friends. I, Ajax, arrived and could see him quaking,
pale and trembling with fear at the thought of the death confronting him.
Setting my massive shield in front of his prostrate body,
I saved his life – small credit in saving so feeble a sluggard!
(Listen to me! If you want to persist in this contest, let's go
once more to the spot; you can bring the enemy back, with your wound
and your typical fear. Hide under my shield and compete with me there!)
But then – what happened? The man whose wounds had prevented him standing,
after I'd rescued him, ran, and there wasn't a wound on his body.
'Hector arrived* and entered the fray with the gods on his side.
Wherever he charged on the field, he struck astonishing terror
not only in cowards like you, Ulysses, but brave men too.
As he revelled in all the havoc he'd wreaked and the blood he had shed,

I threw an enormous stone from a distance and laid him flat.
Earlier on, when he challenged a Greek to engage in a duel,
I took him on by myself. When the lots were cast, you Greeks
all prayed that I should be chosen to fight, and your prayers were answered.
How did the duel turn out? I wasn't defeated by Hector.
Later the Trojans attacked our ships with fire and sword
and Jupiter's help. Where now was the brilliant speaker, Ulysses?
I, with my manly body, protected the thousand ships,
your hopes of return. So give me those arms for my own protection.
But allow me to tell you the truth of the matter: those arms are owed
a greater tribute than I am; their glory and mine are united.
Ajax isn't claiming the arms; the arms claim Ajax.
'Ulysses may set his own deeds against mine: the deaths of King Rhesus*
and Dolon* the craven spy, the capture of Príam's son Hélenus,
the theft of Pallas Athena's statue.* None of those actions
took place in the daytime; what's more, Diomedes was always beside him.
If you were disposed to award these arms for such trivial exploits,
you ought to divide them and give Diomedes the larger share.
'But *why* should Ulysses receive them? He always operates under
cover and carries no arms when he steals on the foe with his ruses.
The glint which shines from Achilles' golden helmet by moonlight
will give him away and show him up as he lurks in ambush.
The Íthacan's head will never be able to carry the weight

of that great plumed helmet; the spear of Pēlian ash will be far too
massive and heavy for feeble arms such as his to throw;
and the shield,* embossed with its picture displaying the whole wide world,
can hardly look well on that soft left hand with its talent for stealing.
How can you claim a reward which will sap your strength? You are shameless!
Even supposing the Greeks were foolish enough to agree,
you won't give the Trojans a reason to fear you, but only to rob you.
Retreat, the single art in which you excel, you cowardly
weakling, will grind to a halt, if you're trailing that great heavy object
behind you in flight. Moreover, the shield that you have so rarely
employed in battle is perfectly sound, while mine, which is riddled
with countless holes from the spears it has stopped, is in need of replacement.
In short, is argument needed? Much better to judge us in action.
Cast the brave hero's arms, Greeks, into the ranks of the foe.
Then call for those arms to be fetched, and let the recoverer keep them!'

The high-born Ajax ended his speech, and his final words
drew a buzz from the crowd, which continued until the noble Ulysses
rose to his feet. For a while he fixed his gaze on the ground;
then he looked straight up at the chiefs who were eagerly waiting in silence

and opened his speech in words as engaging as they were
persuasive:
'Princes of Greece, if only my prayers along with your
own
had prevailed, the victor in this grand contest would not be
in doubt.
Achilles would still have his arms, and we should still have
Achilles.
Since fate has so unkindly denied him to all of you
and to me,' (he spoke with a gesture of wiping the tears
away
from his eyes) 'what better person to follow the great
Achilles
than I, who enabled the great Achilles to follow the Greek
cause?
You shouldn't let Ajax' dullness of intellect count in his
favour
or hold my quickness against myself; it has always been
used
in your service, my lords. Don't grudge me my eloquence,
such as it is;
it has often pleaded for you in the past, and now it is bound
to plead for its master. We cannot ignore the gifts that we
have.
'Ancestry, forebears, titles we haven't achieved for
ourselves,
are scarcely points we can urge. But Ajax has argued that
he is
Jupiter's great-grandson. My extraction also goes back
to Jupiter; I, like Ajax, am third in the line of descent.
I am the son of Laértes, son of Arcésius, fathered
by Jove; and my pedigree doesn't include a convict in
exile.*
I also enjoy high birth through my mother, as she is
descended
from Mercury. Traces of god can be found in both of my
parents.'
However, my claim to the arms of Achilles is not dependent

either on being more nobly born on my mother's side
or on having a father untouched by the guilt of killing his brother.
Judge this case on our personal merits – provided that Ajax
receives no credit for being Achilles' cousin as Péleus
was Telamon's brother. No, let the judgment of arms be a tribute
to valour. Or else, if the next of kin must be first to inherit
and that is the test, then Achilles' weapons should surely be given
to Peleus his father or Pyrrhus his son – no room there for Ajax.
Arrange for those weapons to be dispatched to Phthia or Scyros!*
And Teucer,* no less than Ajax, has rights as a cousin. Is *he*
pursuing a claim? And supposing he did, would he be successful?
'In short, this contest depends on actions, purely and simply,
and I have performed more deeds than I have the skill to encompass
in words. But still, let me tell them in order, as each occurred.
'The sea-goddess Thetis knew that her son was fated to die
if he went to Troy, so she dressed Achilles up as a girl;
and everyone, Ajax included, was taken in by the female
disguise. But I, to excite his masculine interest, inserted
some arms amongst our feminine wares. He still was dressed
in the clothes of a girl when I caught him holding a spear and shield,
and said to him, "Son of a goddess, Pérgamum, doomed to perish,

is waiting for *you*. Why shrink from destroying magnificent Troy?"
Then I gripped his shoulder and sent him forth to a warrior's glory.
Therefore Achilles' deeds are my own. It was I whose spear
disabled our enemy Télephus,* I who later applied
that spear to the conquered king, when he begged to be healed of his wounds.
The fall of Thebae is my achievement; attribute to me
the capture of Lesbos, Scyros, Apollo's cities of Ténedos,
Chryse and Cilla; my hand it was that battered Lyrnéssus'
walls and laid them in ruins. Indeed, it was I who provided
the man who was able to kill fierce Hector, to mention no others.
I floored the notorious Hector! So then, in return for the weapons
through which I discovered Achilles, I claim these weapons before us.
I gave him arms while he lived, and demand arms back from him dead.
'When one man's grievance came to involve the whole of Greece,
and the thousand ships were assembled at Aulis to back Menelâüs,
they waited for many months, but the winds were always against them
or failed entirely to blow. Then a harsh announcement required
Agamémnon to slaughter his innocent daughter* to cruel Diana.
This he refused to do. He resented the gods' decree,
and the king still harboured a father's love. But my persuasions*
induced him to harden his heart for the sake of the common good.
It was I (I have to confess, and I hope that royal Agamemnon

will pardon me for it) who argued that difficult case in
190 front of
a partial judge. In the end, he was swayed by the people's interest,
his brother's wrongs and his role as commander to balance his honour
against the blood of his daughter. I then was dispatched to the mother,*
who needed deceiving more than persuading to send her child.
If Ajax had gone, the fleet would still be stranded at
195 Aulis.
'Next I was sent on a dangerous mission to Troy as an envoy.*
I saw and entered the council-chamber on Ílium's heights,
when the city was still well crowded with men. I fearlessly argued
the case on behalf of the Greek coalition as I'd been instructed,
200 accusing Paris and firmly demanding Helen's return
with all the possessions she'd taken. Priam was moved to agree,
and so was Anténor. But Paris, his brothers and fellow-abductors
could hardly restrain their iniquitous hands – as you know full well,
Menelaüs. That day was the first when I backed you at risk to my own life.
'There isn't the time to recount the contribution I
205 made
to planning and action throughout the length of that tedious war.
After the early battles the Trojans confined themselves
inside the walls of their city. A long while passed when there wasn't
the chance of an open engagement (we finally fought in the tenth year).

What were you doing, Ajax, in all that time? You only
knew about fighting, and otherwise weren't any use;
while I
was busily occupied, laying traps for the enemy, ringing
our lines with trenches, raising the troops' morale to enable
them
better to cope with the boredom, making supply
arrangements
for food and arms, and going on missions as need
demanded.
'Then lo and behold! Deceived by a dream which Jupiter
sends him,
King Agamemnon commands the chiefs to abort
operations,*
justifying this order by claiming that Jupiter wills it.
Would Ajax oppose this change and demand the
destruction of Troy?
Would he fight – which is all he can do? Why didn't he stop
the withdrawal?
Why didn't he seize his arms to offer some lead to the
wavering
rabble? It wasn't too much to expect of a person whose
every
word is a brag. What actually happened? He joined in the rout!
I saw you, Ajax, to my great shame, when you ran for your
life
and issued those shameful orders to spread the sails of your
ship.
I instantly shouted, "What are you up to? You must be
crazy,
my friends, stampeding to give up Troy when it's virtually
taken.
Ten years have gone by and all you are taking home is
dishonour!"
With words such as these, and others inspired by my
indignation,
I made the runaways turn and brought them back from the
ships.

Agamemnon summoned the troops, still quaking with fear, to a meeting.
But even then the heroic Ajax hadn't the courage
to open his mouth (Thersites* actually ventured to challenge
the kings – and was punished by *me* for his rudeness). I rose to my feet
and exhorted my frightened countrymen to confront the Trojans,
thus restoring the courage they'd lost. And ever since then,
whatever valiant deeds my rival may seem to have done
can be counted my own, as I dragged him back when he tried to retreat.
'Finally, who on our side ever praises or seeks you out?
Diomedes shares his adventures with me, and I am the man
whom he wants for his comrade; he always feels safe when Ulysses is with him.
It's no mean thing to be specially picked by *him* out of all those
thousands of Greeks. I wasn't chosen by lot for the venture,
but all the same I defied the risks of a night patrol
and disposed of a foe who was out, like us, on a dangerous mission,
Dolon the Phrygian. I killed him, but not before I had forced him
to talk and betray the plans which the treacherous Trojans were laying.
Now in possession of all the information I needed,
I could have returned to base and won the acclaim I'd been promised.
But not content with so little, I made for Rhesus' encampment,

and there I slaughtered the king and his staff in their very own tents.
So thus victorious, my hopes accomplished, I captured and mounted
the royal chariot; I might have been riding in glorious triumph!*
My lords, if you now deny me the arms of Achilles, whose horses
Dolon demanded as *his* reward for the work of that night,
you'll be meaner than Ajax, who said Diomedes and I should divide them.
'No point in recalling the havoc I wreaked with my sword in the ranks
of Lycian Sarpédon; neither the blood that flowed when I slaughtered
Coéranus, Íphitus' son, with Alástor, Alcánder, Noémon,
Chrómius, Hálius, Prýtanis; cut down Thoön and Charops,
Chersídamas, Énnomus, forced to his death by a merciless fate,
and others less famous who fell by my hand close up to the walls.
I also have wounds to display, my friends. They were nobly won,
on the front of my body. Don't trust in my empty words. Look here!'
(And he opened his tunic.) 'This heart has been always engaged in your service!
But what about Ajax? In all these years he has shed not a single
drop of blood for his friends, and his body remains unmarked!
'What does it really matter if Ajax claims he defended
the fleet of the Greeks against the Trojans when Jupiter backed them?
I admit that he did so, of course – it's not my way to be spiteful

or denigrate what's well done; but he shouldn't reserve for himself
what belongs to all. He should give some credit to you, my lords.
Patróclus,* safely disguised in Achilles' armour, repulsed
the Trojans before they could burn the ships with Ajax inside them.
My rival reckons that none but he had the courage to duel
with Hector – forgetting the king and the chiefs, and forgetting myself.
In fact, he was ninth to come forward and only selected by lot.
But what was the final result of your fight with Hector, you bravest
of warriors? Hector went off without one wound on his body!
'My lords, I find it exceedingly painful to be reminded
of that black hour when Achilles, the bulwark of all the Greeks,
laid down his life. But my tears, my sorrow, my fear of the enemy
never prevented my lifting his body to carry it home.
These, these, I say, were the shoulders on which the corpse of Achilles
was borne from the field with the weapons I now am striving to win.
I have the physical strength that is needed to bear such a weight,
and I have the mind which will surely value this tribute from you.
Why was Achilles' Néreïd mother so deeply concerned
to obtain fresh arms* for her son? Did she really intend that present
from Vulcan, that work of consummate art, to be worn by a brainless

and uncouth soldier? He couldn't describe the features engraved
on the shield: the ocean, the earth and the sky with its constellations,
the Pleiads and Hyads, the Bear that never sinks in the sea,
the circles of sun and moon and the gleaming sword of Oríon.
He's asking you to award him arms which he cannot appreciate.
'Ajax attacks me for shirking the hardships of war and arriving
late on the scene when the expedition was under way.
Has he no idea that he's also maligning the valiant Achilles?
If you call dissembling a crime, then we both dissembled, Achilles
and I. If delay is a fault, then I arrived before he did.
I was detained by my wife's devotion, and he by his mother's.*
We gave our youth to our loved ones, the rest of our lives to Greece.
If I couldn't refute the charge, I should still be proud to have shared
my guilt with a hero such as Achilles – though he was detected
by *my* intelligence; I was not detected by Ajax.
'My lords, we mustn't be too surprised that Ajax is flinging
his stupid slanders at me. You also are being accused
of disgraceful behaviour. Or was it a shocking scandal for me
to have falsely accused Palamedes, but splendid for *you* to convict him?
In fact, Palamedes could not rebut the indictment of treason
or challenge the evidence levelled against him. You didn't just hear it;

you *saw* what he'd done. The case was proved by the bribes he had taken.*
'I don't deserve to be blamed because Philoctetes is stranded
on Vulcan's island of Lemnos. Defend *your* part in the action,
my lords, since you approved it. I grant that I offered my view
that he'd better withdraw himself from the war and the arduous journey,
and try, by resting, to ease the terrible pain of his wound.
Philoctetes agreed – and survives to this day. My advice was not only
well meant, though that would have been enough; it was also effective.
Now the seers declare he is needed for Troy's destruction.
Don't send *me* to escort him! He's crazed by his pain and resentment.
Far better for Ajax to go and use *his* powers of persuasion
to soften his fury and bring him to Troy by some crafty stratagem!
Seriously, though, the Símoïs river will flow upstream,
Mount Ida stand leafless and Greece will promise her aid to Troy,
before I tire in my thoughtful efforts on your behalf
and you have to call on the cunning wits of the witless Ajax.
No matter how much self-willed Philoctetes may hate his old allies,
detest Agamemnon, abominate me and endlessly rain down
curses upon my head; or pray that fortune will place me
within his pain-stricken reach and allow him to drain my blood;

I shall go for him all the same and endeavour to bring him to
Troy.
With luck I shall seize his arrows, as surely as I took
Helenus
prisoner, the prophet through whom I revealed the oracle's
word
how Troy could be captured; then ventured into the heart
of the foe
to seize the statue of Pallas which stood in her innermost
shrine.
In the light of this, can Ajax compare himself to Ulysses?
'The Fates, indeed, had declared that Troy could never be
captured
without that image. But where, my lords, was the valiant
Ajax?
Where were the strong man's boasts? And why should he
then be frightened?
Why did Ulysses dare to make his way through the watch,
entrust himself to the night and brave the swords of the foe,
not merely to enter the walls of the Trojans but mount
right up
to the top of the citadel, thence to steal the goddess away
from her sacred temple and carry her back through the
enemy lines?
Without this achievement of mine, Telamonian Ajax' arm
would have wielded the sevenfold layers of his oxhide shield
to no purpose.
That night, by my doing, the victory was won and Troy was
defeated.
Pergamum fell at the instant I made it no longer invincible.
'Ajax, stop pointing out with your mutters and sullen
looks
that I always could use Diomedes. Far be it from me to
deny it.
You weren't alone when you bore your shield in defence of
the allied
fleet; a crowd was behind you, while only one person
accompanied

me. If he wasn't aware that fighters come lower than thinkers
and prizes aren't owed to a strong right arm, however unflinching,
he'd claim those weapons himself, and so would Ajax the lesser,
warlike Eurýpylus, Thoäs the son of the famous Andraémon;
so would Idómeneus, Mériones his companion from Crete,
and royal Agamemnon's younger brother, the brave Menelaüs.
Of course they are sturdy warriors, fully my equals in battle –
but not in the *tactics* of warfare. Your physical might serves well
on the field, but your limited powers of thinking need my direction.
Your strength is mindless, where my concern is to plan ahead.
You surely can fight, but it's I who advises the king when he's choosing
the critical moment for action. Your simple brawn must be measured
against my brains. In a ship the helmsman takes precedence over
the rower; in war the commander has more respect than the soldier;
so I must rank above you. In the make-up of human beings,
intelligence counts for more than our hands, and that is our true strength.
'Princes of Greece, I call on you now to reward your watchman.
Reward me for all those years of anxious and careful devotion.
I ask you to give me the prize which I'm owed for my dutiful service.

My work is complete: by removing the obstacle fate had imposed,
by enabling the capture of Ilium's towers, I achieved their capture.
By all the hopes that we share, by the toppling defences of Troy,
in the name of the gods whose aid I recently stole from the foe,
by anything yet to be done where intelligent action is needed,
remember Ulysses! Or else, if it cannot be mine, let this armour
be *hers*!' – and he pointed towards the fateful image of Pallas.

AJAX'S SUICIDE

The chieftains were swayed by Ulysses, and oratory's power was proved
when the valiant warrior's arms were won by the skilful speaker.
The loser, who'd fought with Hector in single combat, who'd often
withstood the assaults of fire and sword and of Jupiter, only
failed to withstand his own anger. The hero whom no one had beaten
was beaten at last by resentment. Grasping his sword he cried,
'This at least is mine! Or is this also claimed by Ulysses?
It must be wielded against myself. The weapon so often
stained with the blood of the Trojans must now be stained with its master's.
No one shall have the power to conquer Ajax, but Ajax!'
He spoke, and into the breast which had never been wounded before*
he drove his murderous sword till he buried it up to the hilt.

His hands were too weak to draw out the deeply embedded weapon;
it was only expelled by the force of his blood, which reddened the earth
and there gave rise to a purple flower from the soft green turf,
a flower which had once been born from the wound of the young Hyacinthus.
Both boy and man were recalled in the letters inscribed on the petals,
AIAI* for a cry of lament, AIAI for the name of a hero.

THE FALL OF TROY

The victor Ulysses then sailed on a quest to the island of Lemnos,
a land that once had been ruled by Hypsípyle, daughter of Thoäs,
notorious too as a place where the women had murdered their husbands;*
he went to procure the arrows which Hercules gave Philoctetes.
After these had been brought, with their master, back to the Greeks,
an unduly protracted struggle at long last reached a conclusion.
Ilium blazed, and before the flames had fully subsided,
Jupiter's altar was stained by the murder of aged, thin-blooded
Priam; Cassándra, Apollo's priestess, was dragged away
by the hair, extending her arms to the sky in a useless appeal.
The Dardánian women clung to the statues of Troy's old gods

for as long as they could, but were ruthlessly torn from the burning shrines
by the conquering Greeks – a prize which excited the wrath divine.
Astýanax, Hector's son, was cast from the towers,* from where
his eyes so often had followed his mother's finger and watched
his father fighting to guard both him and their forefathers' kingdom.
Soon a wind from the north was inviting the Greeks to depart;
the sails flapped loud in the breeze and the sailors shouted 'Away!'
'Farewell, dear city!' the women of Troy cried out as they knelt
to kiss the soil of their land and abandoned the smoking ruins.
The last of the women to go on board, and a pitiful sight,
was Hécuba.* Soldiers had found her wandering round the graves
of her sons; as she clung to the mounds and was kissing the bones, she was forcibly
dragged away by Ulysses. Still, she had managed to rescue
the ashes of Hector and bear them off in the folds of her garments.
On Hector's tomb she had left a lock of her silvery hair;
that lock and her tears were the only funeral gifts she could offer.

THE SUFFERINGS OF HECUBA

Across the water from Phrygia, the region where Troy once stood,
you will find the land of the Thracians; and there was the splendid palace

of rich Polyméstor, to whom King Priam had secretly sent
his youngest son, Polydórus. His father had wanted the lad
to be brought up safely and kept away from the Trojan War –
a sensible plan, if a hoard of wealth hadn't gone with the boy
to provoke his guardian's greed and prove a temptation to murder.
When Ilium's fortunes fell, the treacherous king of the Thracians
picked up his sword and plunged it into his charge's throat;
and then, as though all trace of the crime could be killed with the victim,
he tossed Polydorus' corpse from a cliff to be lost in the billows.
Nearby, on the Thracian coast, Agamemnon had anchored his fleet;
he needed a sea that was perfectly calm and a friendlier wind.
Here, all of a sudden, a crack appeared in the earth, and Achilles
emerged, in presence as tall and strong as he'd been in his lifetime;
the dangerous gleam in his threatening eyes recalled the day
when he'd drawn his sword on King Agamemnon in murderous anger.*
'Greeks!' he exclaimed. 'Can you sail away without remembering
me? Have your thanks for my valour been buried along with my ashes?
Do not commit such a sin! My grave must not go unhonoured.
Appease the ghost of Achilles, by sacrificing Polýxena!'

So he spoke, and his comrades obeyed the pitiless phantom.
Torn from Hecuba's arms – she was almost the only comfort
her mother had left – the ill-starred maiden displayed a courage
transcending a woman's, as guards led her up to the hero's mound
to be laid on his grave as a victim. Once in front of the fatal
altar, she realized the cruel rite was intended for her,
but she never forgot who she was. When she saw Neoptólemus waiting,
sword in hand, with his eyes intently fixed on her own,
she said to him: 'Take my noble blood and delay no longer.
I am prepared. All *you* need do is to bury your sword
in my throat or my breast' – and she bared her throat and her bosom together.
'Polyxena surely would never consent to be any man's slave.
I only wish that the news of my death could be kept from my mother;
the thought of her sorrow detracts from the joy that my sacrifice brings me –
although it's her own life, hardly my death, which should cause her to tremble.'
Next she turned to her guards and said: 'May I ask one thing?
Please leave me, I beg you, and stand far off. My wish is to pass
to the Stygian ghosts as free as I've lived. Do not sully a maiden's
body with your male hands. The spirit, whoever he is,
whose anger you seek to appease, will be satisfied better by blood
that flows from a willing victim. Yet one boon more, if my final
words have the power to move – it is Priam's daughter, no captive

who asks you: restore my remains to my mother without demanding
a ransom. Allow her to pay with her tears, not in gold, for the dismal
right to bury my body. She paid gold too when she could.'
As she finished speaking, the people could not restrain the tears
which she had avoided. Even the priest, Neoptolemus, wept
and plunged his sword through her offered breast with a heavy heart.
Polyxena's knees gave way and she sank to the ground, still keeping
the fearless look on her face till the final moment of death.
And even then, as she fell, she preserved her maidenly virtue,
arranging her garments to cover the parts men's eyes should not see.
The women of Troy then lifted her body. They counted the children
Priam had lost and reckoned the blood that had flowed from a single
house. They lamented the maiden, lamented the queen, so recently
known as the consort and mother of kings, the mirror of Asia's
glory, and now no more than a meagre share of the loot,
whom the victor Ulysses would scorn if she weren't after all the mother
of Hector – yes, Hector secured his captive mother a master!
Embracing the brave Polyxena's lifeless body, Hecuba
shed for her daughter the tears she so often had shed for her country,

her sons and her husband. She washed her dear child's
wounds with those tears;
she covered her lips with kisses and rained fresh blows on
her own poor
breasts; then sweeping her white hair over the clotted
blood
and tearing her bosom, she cried in the course of a long
lamentation:
'My daughter, the last of your mother's sorrows – what
else can befall me? –
my child, you are dead and I see your wound, *my* wound
no less.
Yes, you too have a wound; I wasn't allowed to lose
one child without blood being spilt. I thought, since you
were a girl,
you'd be safe from the sword; but girl though you were, the
sword has destroyed you.
The selfsame butcher who murdered your brothers has
murdered you –
Achilles, who ruined Troy and has left me bereft of my
children.
And yet, when he fell to the arrows of Paris and Phoebus
Apollo,
I reckoned, "At least Achilles is not to be feared any
more."
But I needed to fear him still; for even his buried ashes
are angry with our great house; his spite can be felt from the
tomb.
I carried all those children for *him*! Great Ilium's flattened;
the people's affliction has come to an end in the fall of their
city,
but still it has *ended*. It's only for me that Pergamum's
standing;
my tale of sorrow goes on. I was once the most powerful
woman
in all the world; I was strong in my husband, my sons and
my daughters.

Now I've been torn from my loved ones' graves and am helplessly dragged
into exile, to serve as Penélope's prize. As I spin my daily
portion of wool, she'll point me out to the Ithacan women
and proudly say to them, "There is the famous mother of Hector,
there is the wife of King Priam!" Then after so many losses,
you, my daughter, the only companion surviving to comfort
a mother's griefs, have been slaughtered to soothe an enemy's ghost.
I bore my enemy's funeral gift! Oh, why should my heart
of iron endure any longer? Why wait for death to arrive?
What good can come in these weary years? Why keep an old woman
alive, you unfeeling gods, if I'm only to see more corpses?
Who would have thought that Priam could ever be talked of as happy
after the fall of Troy? He is happy because of his own death.
He cannot see your lifeless remains before his eyes,
my beloved daughter. He lost his life when he lost his kingdom.
Well, no doubt, as a royal princess you'll be dowered with funeral
rites, and your body will find a home in the family vault!
Alas, that isn't the luck of our house. The only offerings
you will receive are your mother's tears and a handful of alien
dust. Yes, all is lost . . . But there *is* one reason to cling

to life for a short while longer: one specially favourite child,
the only son who remains to me now and once was my
youngest,
the boy whom we sent to the Thracian king on these shores
– Polydorus.
But why, meanwhile, am I still delaying to wash my
Polyxena's
cruel wounds and the face so ruthlessly spattered with
blood?'

So, saying, the luckless Hecuba hobbled down to the shore,
tearing her hoary locks. As she called to her Trojan women
to hand her a pitcher for drawing water out of the waves,
she saw, cast up on the beach, the corpse of her son
Polydorus,
mangled with gaping wounds from the sword of the
Thracian king.
Her attendants screamed, but the queen was totally dumb
in her anguish.
Her voice was stifled; the tears which were welling behind
her eyes
never came. She stood there frozen in grief, as rigid as
granite.
She stared at the ground directly before her, or else, with a
grim look,
lifted her eyes to the sky, then gazed on her son as he lay
there,
gazed on his face and gazed on his wounds, his wounds
above all,
while she armed herself with smouldering fury and
marshalled her wrath.
As her anger burst into flames, she resolved to punish the
killer –
Queen Hecuba still! – and her mind was filled with her
picture of vengeance.
As a lioness out on the warpath, newly deprived of her
suckling
cub, discovers and follows the trail of her unseen foe,

so Hecuba, after her grief was mingled with anger, forgetting
her age, but not forgetting her rage, made straight for the vile
Polymestor, the man who had foully contrived to murder her boy.
She requested a meeting, and told the king that she wanted to show him
a hoard of gold that she'd hidden, to be returned to her son.
The Thracian tyrant believed her and, scenting the whiff of yet further
booty, he came to the lonely spot. Then craftily smiling
he said to the queen, 'Come on, now, Hecuba; give me the gold
for your son. I swear by the gods in heaven that all you give now
and gave in the past shall be his.' As he perjured himself by these lies,
she ferociously watched, till her temper mounted and boiled right over.
And then she grabbed hold of him tight, with a shout to her posse of female
captives, and dug her fingers into his treacherous eyes,
to gouge the balls from their sockets – the power was lent by her anger.
Next she defiled her hands in his guilty blood, by plunging them
into his face and clawing, not at his eyes (they were gone),
but the holes where his eyes had been. The people of Thrace were enraged
by this savage assault on their king, and started to pelt the Trojan
woman with weapons and stones. But she just snapped with a snarling
growl at the rocks which they threw. As she opened her jaws in a vain

attempt to give tongue, she barked. (The place where this miracle happened
exists to this day and is suitably called Cynosséma, the Dog's Tomb.)
Even after this change, old Hecuba long remembered
her ancient wrongs, and the plains of Thrace were filled with her doleful
howling. Her Trojan friends and her Grecian foes were distressed
alike by the fate of the queen; and all of the gods were affected –
every one of them. Even Jupiter's sister and consort
declared that Hecuba hadn't deserved such an ending as that!

MEMNON

Only Auróra felt no pain at Troy's and Hecuba's
ruinous fall, although she had backed their cause in the war.
She hadn't the time; she was touched by a closer, personal grief
in the loss of Memnon, the son whom the goddess with robes of saffron
had watched being killed on the Phrygian plains by the spear of Achilles.
That moment, the rosy red which tinges the sky in the morning
turned to a deadly pallor and heaven was hidden in cloud.
When Memnon's body was laid on the funeral pyre, his mother
was too heart-broken to watch. With her hair still loosened in token
of mourning, she humbly prostrated herself at the knees of almighty
Jove and addressed him in tears: 'I know that I am the lowest
of all the gods in the golden heavens (my temples are few

and widely scattered across the world), but I still am a goddess.
I've not come here to obtain more shrines or festival days
or altars to blaze with sacrificed victims. If you would consider
what useful service I render, although I am only a woman,
each dawn when I check the night from encroaching on day's domain,
you'd judge I should have some reward. But I'm not concerned in my present
state of distress to claim the worship I'm justly owed.
I am here because I have lost my Memnon, who doughtily fought,
though in vain, for his uncle Priam and then was condemned by you gods
to be killed in the prime of his life at the hands of the doughty Achilles.
Supreme ruler of heaven, I pray you to comfort his spirit
by paying some tribute, and so to soothe the wounds of his mother.'
Jupiter nodded assent. Young Memnon's high-built pyre
collapsed, the flames leapt up, and rolling columns of black smoke
darkened the light of day, as vapour rises like breath
from the rivers and forms a fog which the sun's bright rays cannot penetrate.
Cinders of charcoal flew to the sky, then massed and thickened
into a single body, assuming an outline and drawing
heat and life from the fire. The ash's lightness provided
its wings. Could it be a winged creature? At first no more than a phantom,
but soon a rustle of feathers – a bird! Then a flock of her sisters

was beating their wings beside her, and all derived from the same source.
They circled the pyre three times; three times their unison wailing
rang through the air. The fourth time round, they divided their forces;
two armies, marshalled on different sides, engaged in a savage
battle, angrily using their beaks and the hooks of their talons
to tear the breasts and to tire the wings of the enemy facing them.
Bodies created from dead man's ash fell down from the air
to be funeral gifts in remembrance of Memnon, the hero from whom
they were sprung, and who also gave these miraculous fledglings their name
of Memnónides.* Each year, when the sun has completed its zodiac
round, they go to war once again and die like their parents.*
And so, while others lamented the change of Hecuba into
a barking dog, Aurora was wholly absorbed in her own grief.
She weeps to this day, and the morning dew is her dutiful mourning.*

THE WANDERINGS OF AENEAS (1)

Yet destiny wouldn't allow Troy's hopes to be overturned
along with her walls. Aenéas, the hero whose mother was Venus,
rescued his household gods and, through the flames, on his shoulders
he carried a burden as sacred, his venerable father Anchíses.

These, with his own dear son Ascánius, formed the spoil
which Aeneas the dutiful* chose to salvage from all his possessions.
Fleeing across the sea with his people in ships from Antándros,
he came to the infamous coast of Thrace, where the young Polydorus
had stained the earth with his blood; but he quickly abandoned the visit.
Next, with the backing of wind and tide, he arrived at Apollo's
island of Delos and entered the city with all his companions.

THE DAUGHTERS OF ANIUS

Ánius, king of the people, who also served as the priest
of Apollo, welcomed Aeneas into the palace and temple.
He showed him the town with its famous shrines and the stumps of the two trees
gripped long ago by Leto's arms in the pangs of her labour.*
Incense was cast in the flames, and wine was poured on the incense;
entrails of sacrificed oxen were burnt in traditional manner.
That done, all made for the palace hall, where they rested on high-raised
couches and freely partook of the gifts of Ceres and Bacchus.
Then said pious Anchises: 'Chosen priest of Apollo,
I could be mistaken, but when I entered these walls for the first time,
I seem to remember your family boasting a son and four daughters.'

Anius shook his head, encircled in snow-white bands,
and sadly replied: 'You are perfectly right, most mighty Anchises.
You saw a man who was blessed with five magnificent offspring;
but now, so fickle in human fortune, I'm almost bereft
of my children. What help can my son afford, when he lives as my regent
far away on the island of Andros which bears his name?
Apollo gave him prophetic powers, while Bacchus endowed
my daughters with other talents surpassing hope or belief.
All that they touched was transformed into corn or wine or the juice
of the grey-green olive – which made them a source of exceptional profit.
This came to the ears, on his voyage to Troy, of King Agamemnon
(we also were hit to a certain degree by the storm advancing
on you), and he used armed force to tear my daughters away
from their loving father against their will; then he told them to use
their miraculous powers to supply the Argive fleet with provisions.
They all escaped where they could: two found a home in Euboéa,
the other pair got away to their brother's island of Andros.
An army arrived with an ultimatum, demanding the women's
surrender. Fear prevailed over brotherly love, and Andros
handed his sisters over to pay the price for their flight –
forgivable weakness, perhaps; no Aeneas was there to defend him,
no Hector whose courage enabled you all to survive ten years.

The prisoners' arms were awaiting their shackles; but while they were still free,
both of them raised their hands to the sky and called upon Bacchus
to come to their aid – which he did, if strangely losing one's shape
is aid of a sort, though how they lost it I never have known
and couldn't say now. But the final disaster was all too plain:
my daughters were covered with feathers and changed into snow-white doves,
the birds that are sacred to Venus, your own dear consort, Anchises.'

THE DAUGHTERS OF ORION

The banquet passed in the telling of these and similar stories.
The tables were taken away, and all retired to their beds.
Rising at dawn, the Trojan wanderers visited Phoebus'
oracular shrine. The god enjoined them to 'search for their ancient
mother and kindred shores'.* As they left, the king escorted them
down to the ships and gave them presents to speed their departure.
Anchises received a staff, his grandson a cloak and a quiver,
Aeneas a mixing-bowl which his host had been brought as a gift
in the past by one of his guest-friends, Therses of Thebes in Boeotia.
The bowl had been crafted by Alcon of Rhodes and told a long story

embossed on the metal. It showed a city with seven gates
(you could easily point them out), which stood for the
name of the city*
and said what it was. Outside a funeral scene was depicted,
with burial mounds and funeral pyres; there were women
with naked
breasts and wildly dishevelled hair in token of mourning.
Nymphs could also be seen in tears, bemoaning their
dried-up
springs; the leafless trees were standing all stiff and bare,
while goats were nibbling at rocks and grazing on
withered lichen.
There, in the middle of Thebes, the artist had pictured
Oríon's
daughters, who died for their people.* Their bodies were
being carried
along the streets to the square in a lovely cortège, for
cremation;
and then, to continue the family line, from out of the
maidens'
ashes there rose two youths, whom legend knows as
Coróni,
and these were portrayed as leading a second solemn
procession
to carry the ashes from which they had sprung from pyre to
tomb.
So much for the gleaming figures embossed on the ancient
bronzework;
the rim of the bowl was adorned in relief with gilded
acanthus.
The Trojans reciprocated these presents with others as
handsome.
The priest of Apollo was given a casket for storing his
incense,
a splendid libation-bowl and a gold crown studded with
jewels.

THE WANDERINGS OF AENEAS (2)

From Delos they sailed to Crete, the homeland of
Teucer, to whom
the Trojans remembered they owed their descent;* but they couldn't endure
the climate for long. So they left the isle of a hundred cities
and eagerly set their course for their promised Italian land.
But a storm blew up which battered their ships and drove them into
the Stróphades' port. This proved a treacherous shelter, as hope
was turned to dismay by Aëllo the Harpy's*
frightening prophecies.
Soon they had passed Dulíchium's harbour, Íthaca, Samos
and Néritos' town, which was part of the kingdom of crafty Ulysses.
Then they sighted Ambrácia, the city three gods had competed
to have for their own, with the rock in the shape of the shepherd judge*
who had been transformed. (Ambracia is now well known for Apollo's
temple at Áctium,* crowning the cape.) They called at Dodóna,
grove of the talking oaks, and entered Chaónia's bay,
where good King Múnichus'* sons escaped from the flames, when impious
robbers set fire to their house, by being changed into birds.
Next they made for Corcýra, an island of fruitful orchards,
but came to port in Epírus, where Helenus reigned in
Buthrótum,

the city he called New Troy.* When the prophet had faithfully warned them
of all the dangers ahead, they put to sea once again
and landed on Sicily's soil. This island can boast three capes:
Pachýnus facing the south with its rainy winds, Lilybaéum
the gentler breezes that blow from the west, and Pelórus the Bears
and the freezing blasts of the north. The Trojans arrived at Pelorus.
Rowing ashore on a favouring tide as the night came on,
they discovered a sandy cove for their ships on the coast of Messána.
The straits on the left are unsafe because of the restless Charýbdis,
who catches the passing ships to gulp them down in her whirlpool
and then to vomit them forth. The right is infested by Scylla,
a monster whose foul black belly is girdled with ravening dogs.
Her face is a girl's and, assuming the stories that poets have left us
are not completely untrue, she *had* been a girl who was courted
by numerous wooers – though Scylla rejected them all and often
went down to the ocean-nymphs, who were always delighted to see her,
to gossip about the various lovers whose suit she'd evaded.
One day she was combing the hair of one of the nymphs, Galatéa,
who heaved a series of sighs and then protested with feeling:

ACIS, GALATEA AND POLYPHEMUS

'O Scylla, a civilized class of wooer is trying to win
your hand, and you aren't at risk in refusing them all
as you're doing.
But I, whose father is Néreus, whose mother is
sea-green Doris,
I who am also blessed with a throng of sisters to guard
me,
have only escaped from the Cyclops' love at a grievous
price!'
Her voice, as she spoke, was choked with tears. When
Scylla had wiped
Galatea's eyes with her smooth white fingers and given
her comfort,
she said to the goddess, 'My dearest friend, please tell
me your trouble.
Why are you sad? Don't keep it a secret; you know you
can trust me.'
The Nereïd thus responded to Scylla's compassionate
questions:
'Faunus, a god of the countryside, had a son called
Acis.
The child had been born to a nymph who was sprung
from the river Symaéthus,
and gave the greatest of joy to both his father and
mother,
but joy even greater to me, as he was my only lover –
a beautiful boy of sixteen, with the first smooth down
on his cheeks!
While I kept sighing for *him*, I was chased night and
day by the Cyclops.
If you asked me whether I hated the Cyclops more than
I worshipped
Acis, I couldn't give you an answer. My love and my
loathing

were equally balanced. O Venus, our mother, with what strong power
you govern our hearts! The Cyclops was such a barbaric creature.
Even the woods were appalled by his presence; no stranger could safely
encounter the giant who scorned the gods and the heights of Olympus.
And yet he discovered the meaning of love, and neglected his flocks
and his cave when the flames of his violent passion were raging inside him.
Now, in his longing to please me, he bothered about his appearance.
The wild Polyphémus was combing his prickly locks with a mattock,
attempting to trim his shaggy beard with a pruning-hook,
and trying to look less fierce when he gazed at his face in a pool.
His passion for slaughter, his brutal ways and his boundless bloodlust
were all in abeyance; the ships could arrive and depart without danger.
One day a visitor put into Sicily close to Mount Etna,
Télemus, Eúrymus' son, an infallible augur of omens.
He came to the grim Polyphemus and said, "You are doomed to be robbed
of that single eye on the front of your brow by a man called Ulysses."
The Cyclops replied with a laugh, "You are wrong, most stupid of prophets.
My eye has already been robbed by another!" And so he rejected
that truthful but useless warning, and pompously trampled the shore
with his giant's steps, or withdrew tired out to the depths of his cave.

Picture a wedge-like promontory jutting over the sea
in a long sharp point, while the waves swirl round each
side at the bottom.
Here the fierce Polyphemus climbed and eased himself
down
where the view was the best, with his leaderless sheep
all trailing behind him.
He dropped the pine trunk, tall as a mast, which served
for his staff,
by his feet, and produced an enormous pipe of a
hundred reeds.
His shepherd's whistling was heard by the waves and
across the whole range
of surrounding mountains. I also drank it in from a
distance,
hiding close to the cliff and reclined in the arms of my
Acis.
These are the words which I heard him sing and fixed
in my memory:
'"Whiter than snowy petals of privet, my fair
Galatea,
richer in bloom than the meadows, more slender and
tall than the alder,
sparkling as crystal glass, more sprightly and free than
a young kid,
smoother than all the shells that are worn away by the
ocean,
welcome as sun in the winter or shade in the heat of
the summer,
you nimble gazelle, you lovelier sight than the tallest of
plane trees,
gleaming more brightly than ice and sweeter than
grapes in the harvest,
softer than curdled milk or the feathery wings of a
swan,
more lush than a beautiful garden – if only you
wouldn't avoid me.

'"Wilder too than an untamed heifer, my fair Galatea,
harder than ancient oak, more wayward than shifting waves,
tougher than shoots of the pliant willow or bryony bine,
more stubborn than this stone crag, more rough than a river in full spate,
proud as a peacock in grand display, more fiery than fire,
more prickly than thorns, more fierce than the she-bear nursing her young,
more deaf than the sea, more vicious and cruel than a trampled snake;
with the power that I wish above all I could take away from your nature,
the fleetness of foot to outpace not only the stag when he's chased
by the baying pack, but even the winds and the wing-swift breezes.
'"Oh, if you only knew, you'd regret having shunned me, you'd even
curse your own coyness and do your utmost to hold my affections.
I own a cave on the mountain side; it is vaulted over
in living rock, and it never lets in the heat of the midday
sun or the winter's cold. My orchards are groaning with apples,
my trailing vines are swollen with grapes, both golden yellow
and purply red; I am storing each harvest for your delight.
With your own fair hands you will pick the most delicious of strawberries
growing under the trees, the cornel berries in autumn,
and juicy plums, not only the dark blue kind, but also
the choicer sort with the golden colour of fresh-made wax.
With me as your lover, you'll have sweet chestnuts and arbutus fruits
in the richest abundance; so every tree shall be at your service.

'"All these sheep are my own; many others are roaming the valleys,
browsing apart in the woods or safely penned in my cave.
If you asked me, I shouldn't be able to tell you how many there are;
only a poor man counts his sheep. But you needn't believe
what I say in their praise. If you come to the fold, you will see for yourself
that their legs can hardly straddle the udders, they're so distended.
You'll see my lambs in their snug warm pens and my baby goats.
I always have pailfuls of rich white milk, and I keep one part
to be drunk as it is, while the rest is hardened by rennet to cheeses.
'"The pets that I lay in your lap won't only be ordinary presents,
the easy ones to obtain, like a doe or a hare or a goat,
a pair of doves or a nest of birds removed from a treetop.
I've found a couple of twins whom you'll be able to play with,
so like each other, you'll hardly be able to tell them apart,
some cubs that I took on the mountain peak – from a shaggy bear!
When I found them, I said to myself, 'I'll keep those cubs for my mistress!'
Now, Galatea, do raise your glistening head from the deep blue
sea and come to my arms. Don't scorn the gifts that I offer.
'"Truly, I know myself, I recently saw my reflection
in pure clear water and liked the image that met my gaze.

Look at my massive size! Great Jupiter, high in the heavens,
hasn't a larger frame (in the tale you people keep telling
some Jove or other* is reigning up there). A forest of hair
towers over my strong stern features and shades my magnificent shoulders.
Don't think me ugly because my body's a bristling thicket
of prickly hair. A tree is ugly without any foliage;
so is a horse, if a mane doesn't cover his tawny neck;
birds are bedecked in plumage, and sheep are clothed in their own wool.
Men look well with a beard and a carpet of hair on their chests.
I've only one eye on my brow, in the middle, but that is as big
as a fair-sized shield. Does it matter? The Sun looks down from the sky
on the whole wide world, and he watches it all with a single eye.
'"Remember, my father* is king in your own abode of the sea;
I'm giving you *him* for a father-in-law! Have pity, I beg you,
and hear your suppliant's pleas. You're the only being I bow to;
I scorn proud Jove and his sky and the piercing bolt of his lightning.
It's *you* that I fear, Galatea; your anger is fiercer than lightning.
To tell you the truth, I could better endure this cruel contempt,
if *all* your suitors were shunned. But why reject Polyphemus
and turn to Acis for love? What are Acis' embraces to mine?
Very well, let him fancy himself; and you have my reluctant permission
to fancy him too, Galatea. But let chance bring him my way,

and he'll soon discover the giant's strength in my giant's frame.
I'll draw his guts from his living body, then tear it to pieces
and scatter his limbs all over the fields and the waves where your home is –
yes, he can mate with you there like that! Oh see, I am burning,
the fire of the terrible wrong you have done me is blazing more fiercely!
Mount Etna has moved! I can feel it erupting inside my heart
with all its volcanic power – and it leaves you cold, Galatea!"
'The Cyclops finished his futile lament. I was watching and saw him
rise and keep on the move as he stumped away through the well-known
pastures and woods, like a frantic bull deprived of his cow.
Acis and I were entirely unready for what happened next:
the wild brute suddenly saw us and cried aloud, "I can see you,
and I'll make certain that this is the last of your loving encounters!"
The tone of his voice was as loud as you might expect in a furious
Cyclops; his shouting created a quake in the whole of Mount Etna.
My own response was to dive straight into the sea in a panic,
while Acis, my hero, turned and took to his heels as he yelled out,
"Help me! Help, Galatea, I beg you! Oh help me, my parents!
I'm going to die. You must let me into your watery kingdom!"

The Cyclops followed him close, then wrenched a part of the mountain
away from its side, and hurled it at Acis. Although his rival
was only struck by the edge of the rock, it crushed him completely.
'I then did the only thing which the fates would allow: I gave
my lover the powers of his mother's father, the river Symaethus.
A trickle of crimson blood was flowing from under the boulder,
but after a little while the redness started to vanish.
First it turned to the muddy brown of a swollen torrent,
then slowly it cleared completely. That moment, I touched the rock
and it gaped wide open. A tall green seed shot up from the crack;
the hollow mouth of the opening rang with the roar of cascading
water; and wonder of wonders, there suddenly rose waist-high
a youth with horns on his brow, which were wreathed in a garland of rushes.
The youth was Acis, except he was taller and all of his face
was the colour of dark sea-green. But even so it was Acis,
transformed to a river* whose course has retained his original name.'

GLAUCUS AND SCYLLA (1)

Galatea's story was ended, and all her Nereïd sisters
around her dispersed as they swam to their homes through the peaceful waves.
But Scylla returned to the shore, for she dared not trust herself
to the open sea; and she either roamed unclothed on the thirsty

sand or, when she was tired, she would look for a land-locked cove
and take a refreshing bathe in the swirl of a sea-water pool.
Suddenly, skimming the waves, there arrived a new sea-dweller, Glaucus,
who'd recently suffered a change of shape in Boeótian Anthédon.
As soon as he sighted the fair young girl, he was snared by her beauty
and said whatever he hoped might prevent her running away.
But his words went for nothing; she fled as fast as she could in her terror
and climbed right up to the top of the mountain adjoining the shore.
Now picture a huge crag,* facing the strait; it peaks in a single
point and slopes, well covered with trees, far into the sea.
Here Scylla was safe and she came to a halt. Unsure whether Glaucus
was monster or god, she gazed in awe at his blue-green body,
the hair which covered his shoulders and back, and the flexible fishtail
mounting as far as his loins. The sea-god realized that Scylla
was struck with amazement and, leaning up on a nearby rock,
'Fair maiden,' he said, 'I am not some monster or dangerous beast,
but a god of the sea. My sway in the ocean is no less mighty
than Próteus or Triton wields, or Áthamas' offspring, Palaémon.*
I once was mortal, but even then I was destined for life

in the depths of the sea and passed my days in the joys of the ocean,
drawing the nets which were drawing the fish, or busily plying
my rod as I sat on the rocks. Right next to the shore lies a meadow;
one side of the beach you have waves, and the other is bordered by grass.
This grass has never been cropped by the sharp-horned heifers, or browsed
by peaceful sheep or the hairy goats. The pollen's not gathered
by busy bees, and the flowers aren't plucked for festival garlands.
The field has never been mown with a sickle; and I was the first
to sit on the ground there, drying my meshes and spreading the fish
on the grass, to count the catch brought into my nets by chance,
or lured by the bait to the hook on my line. You may not believe
what I'm going to tell you now, but why should I want to deceive you?
As soon as the fish were placed on the grass, they started to move,
to flop right over and travel across the ground as they'd used
to glide in the sea. And while I was waiting in wonder, they all jumped
into the waves to abandon the shore and the master who'd caught them.
I was dumbfounded and long perplexed as I searched for a cause:
had a god produced this effect, or was it some juice in the grass?
"No grass in the world has a power like this!" I said to myself,

as I casually plucked a couple of blades and started to chew them.
I'd barely swallowed the unfamiliar juices down,
when I suddenly felt a powerful flutter inside my heart
and was seized with an overwhelming desire to belong to the sea.
I couldn't remain where I was, and I cried out, "Earth, I shall never
tread you again, farewell!" Then I instantly dived under water.
The sea-gods received me and judged me worthy of joining their number.
Ocean and Tethys were asked to purge me of all my mortal
features, and quickly they both took charge of my ritual cleansing.
After they'd chanted a spell nine times for my purification,
I next was told to immerse myself in a hundred streams.
At once the rivers discharged their waters from every direction
and swirled in a deluge over my head. So much I remember
and thus can tell you what ought to be told; of the rest I know nothing.
As soon as my senses returned, my body was totally different
from what it had been before; and I wasn't the same in my mind.
It was then that I first set eyes on this beard encrusted with green,
on the hair which sweeps in my wake as I swim far over the sea,
my colossal shoulders, my blue-coloured arms and my curving legs
which vanish away to a fish with fins. But what is this form worth?

What is the point of the sea-gods' approval, of being a god,
if it all means nothing to you?' The god was still speaking
and would have
said more,* but Scylla had fled. Enraged by this cruel
rejection,
he made for the halls of the sun god's daughter, the
sorceress Circe.

BOOK 14

In this book we move, via Ovid's 'little *Aeneid*', from the mythology of Greece and Troy to that of Italy and Rome itself, though we are treated on the way to two fine episodes based on Homer's *Odyssey*. A pivotal character in the sequence is the Titaness Circe, a familiar figure in Greek poetry, whose fabulous island was later identified with the promontory of Circeii on the coast of Latium in western Italy. After the death of Aeneas, the kings of Alba Longa down to Romulus provide a framework for the last erotic story. As a whole, the book is the most broken-up in the poem and accommodates no fewer than sixteen metamorphoses – something of a rag-bag, but still with many extremely enjoyable passages.

The story of *Glaucus and Scylla* (1–74) continues with Glaucus' appeal to the sorceress Circe for a charm to win Scylla for him. But Circe wants Glaucus for herself and spitefully turns Scylla into the well-known monster with dogs' heads round her waist.

The Wanderings of Aeneas (3) (75–100) incorporates an account of the metamorphosis of the inhabitants of Pithecusae to apes and also prompts the story of *The Sibyl of Cumae* (101–52). At the place later to be called Caieta, Ovid contrives a meeting between two of Ulysses' former companions, Achaemenides and Macareus. This motivates the former's account of the ordeal of *Ulysses' Men in Polyphemus' Cave* (154–222) – no metamorphosis here, but with plenty of scope for bloodthirsty detail. Macareus responds with Ovid's version of *Ulysses' encounter with Circe* (223–307), in which he dwells with relish on the details of the sailors' metamorphosis to pigs and on the

reverse transformation. Macareus also relates an old Italian story (308–440), learned from one of Circe's attendants, about an early Italian king *Picus* whom *Circe* turned into a woodpecker because he preferred the charms of his wife *Canens* to her own – we are reminded of her spiteful treatment of Glaucus.

The Wanderings of Aeneas (4) (441–53b) brings the Trojans up the Tiber; and the war with the Rutulians under Turnus, which occupies most of *Aeneid* 7–12, is rapidly started. This occasions an unsuccessful appeal for military aid by the Rutulian Venulus to the former Greek hero Diomedes, who has now settled in Apulia. Diomedes explains that he cannot help as he has lost a number of his *Mutinous Companions* (454–512) by metamorphosis on his voyage from Greece to Italy. Venulus' return from his mission includes another transformation in the brief story of *The Apulian Shepherd* (513–26). Ovid continues with an episode, taken from Virgil *Aeneid* 9, when Turnus fires the *The Ships of Aeneas* (527–65), and they are only saved through the agency of Cybele, who transforms them into nymphs. After the death of Turnus, the fall of the chief Rutulian city of *Ardea* (566–80) allows the mysterious appearance of a heron (Latin *ardea*) out of the ruins. The final metamorphosis in this section is *The Apotheosis of Aeneas* himself (581–607), when Venus persuades Jupiter to admit her son to heaven.

A brief catalogue of *Aeneas' Descendants* (the mythical kings of Alba Longa) follows (608–21). The reign of Proca occasions the last love story in the poem (622–771), which links *Pomona*, the Roman goddess of fruits, with the Etruscan god *Vertumnus*. Inset in this appealing narrative is the Cypriot tale of *Iphis and Anaxarete* (698–761), which Vertumnus, disguised as a crone, uses to warn Pomona against hardheartedness.

The reign of *Romulus* (772–804) marks the foundation of Rome. The war following the rape of the Sabine women leads to the Sabines' attack on Rome being obstructed by the metamorphosis of an icy spring to an impassable geyser. The book concludes with *The Apotheosis of Romulus* (805–51), at his father Mars' request, followed by the translation to the sky of his wife Hersilië.

GLAUCUS AND SCYLLA (2)

Glaucus, who'd left Euboéa for life in the swell of the ocean,
had now passed Etna, the mountain piled on the throat of the giant
Typhon. He'd passed the fields of the Cyclops, which never had known
the working of harrow or plough and owed no debt to yoked oxen.
He'd passed Messána and also the walls of Rhégium opposite,
finding his way through the dangerous strait, where the waters are bounded
by Italy's soil on the one side and Sicily's coast on the other.
Thence powerfully swimming across the Etruscan Sea,* he arrived
at the herb-green hills and the halls of Circe, the sun god's daughter,
halls that were crowded with various beasts. Once he had seen her
and greetings had been exchanged, the guest appealed to his hostess:
'Goddess, I pray you, pity a god! You alone can lighten
this longing of mine, if you will but judge me worth your compassion.
Titaness, no one knows the power of herbs and grasses
better than I, for my transformation was due to their magic.
But let me tell you the cause of the passion raging inside me:
on Italy's coast, where it faces the walls of Messana, I saw her,
I saw my Scylla. Shame forbids me to tell you the promises,

prayers and wheedling words I employed – to be cruelly
rejected.
Oh Circe, if spells can hold any sway, now open those holy
lips to utter a spell; or if herbs will be more effectual,
use the proven power of a herb which will do what is
needed.
I do not ask to be cured myself, or my wound to be healed,
or an end to my love, but for Scylla to share the heat of my
passion!'
Circe, however, possessed a heart more open than others
to love's strong flames (it might have been her own nature,
or caused
by Venus, who'd never forgotten that Circe's father, the sun
god,
betrayed her affair with Mars*), and so she responded to
Glaucus:
'You'd do far better to follow a woman whose wishes and
prayers
are at one with your own, whose heart is fired by an equal
passion.
You deserved to be actively wooed for yourself – you could
have been, surely.
Offer some hope and, believe me, you *shall* be wooed
without wooing.
To banish all doubt and distrust you may have in your
power to attract,
look into my eyes. I may be a goddess, the daughter born
to the gleaming Sun; the power of my spells and my herbs
may be great;
but I pray that I may be yours. Reject the one who rejects
you,
respond to her who pursues you, and give two women at
once
the payment you owe them.' To these advances Glaucus
replied,
'While Scylla is living, my love for her will not alter, till
foliage

grows in the ocean and seaweed sprouts on the peaks of the mountains!'
The goddess was deeply offended. She couldn't do mischief to Glaucus
(moreover, she loved him too well), but she vented her spleen on the girl
he preferred to herself. Enraged because he had scorned her attentions,
she promptly pounded together some plants which were noxious with sinister
juices, and chanted the spells of her witchcraft over the mixture.
Then donning a sea-blue cloak, she grandly advanced through the throng
of her fawning beasts as she went on her way from the heart of the palace.
She made for Rhegium, over the strait from the rocks of Messana,
and there she walked on the seething waves of a stormy sea,
as though it were solid land, and skimmed the surface with dry feet.
Picture a little pool, with its margin curved like a bow,
where Scylla delighted to rest. It was here she would find a retreat
from the fury of sea and the sky when the noonday sunbeams were burning
most fiercely and shadows were shortest. This pool was polluted by Circe
beforehand; she fouled it with monster-producing poisons, by sprinkling
the juice from a baleful root, as she darkly muttered her magical
spell thrice nine times over in mazy, mysterious language.
Scylla arrived at the pool and had stepped in up to the waist

when she saw that her loins were disfigured by horrible
barking creatures.
At first she had no idea that these formed part of her body
and shrank to the side in fear as she tried to repel the
importunate
snapping intruders, but merely dragged at what she was
fleeing.
She frantically felt for the flesh of her thighs, her legs and
her feet,
but all that she found was a cluster of gaping hell-hounds.
She'd nothing
to stand on but rabid dogs, whose bestial backs she was
holding
in check beneath her truncated loins and protuberant belly.
Glaucus, her lover, wept. Fair Circe had been so
malicious
in using the magical power of her herbs, and he spurned her
embraces.
Scylla remained where she was and took the first chance she
was given
to show her hatred for Circe by grabbing Ulýsses'
companions.
Later on she would also have drowned the ships of the
Trojans,
had she not first been changed to a headland of rock,*
which still stands
there to this day and is shunned by sailors as carefully as
ever.

THE WANDERINGS OF AENEAS (3)

The Trojans had deftly manoeuvred their ships past Scylla's
rock
and Charýbdis' whirlpool and now were almost
approaching Italian
shores, when a storm diverted them south to the coast of
Africa.

There they were taken to hearth and heart by Sidónian Dido,*
who found Aenéas' sudden departure a cruel separation.
She built a funeral pyre on false religious pretences,
and fell on her sword, so cheating the world as she had been cheated.
In backward flight from the new city walls on the sandy coast,
Aeneas returned to his friend Acéstes at Eryx, to offer
sacrifice where his father had died and to honour the grave.
When the fleet had almost been burnt by Iris at Juno's bidding,*
the Trojans set sail once more. They passed the Aeólian islands,
where sulphurous smoke pours out of the earth, then the rocks of the Sirens.
Aeneas' ship was deprived of his helmsman, the drowned Palinúrus,
but soon it was skirting Inárime, Próchyte, past Pithecúsae,
placed on a barren hill and called Apetown from the people
who live there. They'd once been known as Cercópians; later, however,
Jupiter changed them to misshaped creatures, because he detested
their lying, deceitful ways and the treacherous crimes they'd committed.
He wanted them both to be different from men and resemble them too.
So he shortened their limbs and flattened their noses; he furrowed their faces
with elderly wrinkles; he covered their bodies completely in tawny
hair; then he set them to live on this island. But first he denied them

the use of their tongues and words to utter their dreadful perjuries;
all that remained was their power of complaining – in raucous screeches.

THE SIBYL OF CUMAE

When he'd passed this place to the right and Parthénope's city of Naples,
Aeneas arrived on the shores of the marshy region of Cumae,
and entered the cave of the long-lived Sybil. His prayer was to traverse
the underworld kingdom in order to visit the shade of his father.
The prophetess held her gaze long fixed on the earth, till she raised
her head as her soul was possessed by the god, and finally uttered
in frenzy: 'You ask great things, you greatest of heroes, whose valour
was proved by your sword in the fray and whose love as a son and a father
was tested by fire. But, noble Trojan, you need not be troubled.
Your prayer shall be granted and I shall guide you to Pluto's realm,*
where you'll see the Elysian Fields and meet your father's dear spirit.
No path is closed to the virtuous man.' So speaking, she showed him
a golden bough which gleamed on a tree in Prosérpina's forest
and told him to break it off from the trunk. Aeneas obeyed her
and so was allowed to descend and set eyes on the wealth of the awesome

god of the dead, on his own forefathers and lastly the ghost
of aged Anchíses, the great of heart, who taught him the laws
which govern Avérnus and also the dangers facing his people
in wars to come. Thence wearily climbing the uphill track
to the earth, he lightened the tiring journey in talk with the Sibyl;
and while he was plodding his fearful way through the murky twilight,
he said to his guide from Cumae, 'You may be truly a goddess,
or merely beloved of the gods; but by me you shall always be counted
a spirit divine, and I shall owe it to your consent
that I came to the land of the dead and returned thence after I'd seen it.
For these great mercies, when I am restored to the air above,
I shall build you a sacred temple and pay you the tribute of incense.'
The Sibyl turned to Aeneas and, heaving a deep sigh, said to him:
'Goddess I never have been; and a mortal creature may not
be accorded the tribute of holy incense. Yet ignorance must not
lead you astray. Eternal life was there for the taking,
if only I'd offered my maidenhood up to the love of Apollo;
but while he hoped that I'd yield and desired to seduce me with gifts,
he said to me, "Maiden of Cumae, now choose what you wish to be yours,
and your wish shall be granted." I showed him a pile of dust that I'd gathered

and foolishly asked for my birthdays to equal the number of sand-grains,
failing also to ask that those years should always be youthful.
Yet Phoebus agreed and offered perpetual youth as well,
if I'd let him enjoy my body. I spurned his gift and remain
forever a virgin unwedded. But now the joy of my springtime
is past, and weak old age with its trembling gait is upon me,
age to be long endured. I have lived seven hundred years,
but still have to see three hundred harvests and seasons of vintage
to equal the number of grains in the pile. The time will arrive
when the length of days shall shrink my body from all it has been
to a tiny frame, and my age-worn limbs be reduced to the weight
of a feather. Then no one will ever believe that I once was adored
and desired by a god. Yes, even Phoebus may fail to recall me,
or else he'll deny that he loved me. So changed, so invisible! Yet,
the fates will leave me my voice, the voice by which men will know me.'*

ACHAEMENIDES' STORY: ULYSSES' MEN IN POLYPHEMUS' CAVE

Mounting the slope to the earth, the Sibyl recounted her history,
until they emerged from the Stygian world in the township of Cumae,
where Trojan Aeneas offered the sacrifice due to the gods.

Next he put into shore at the place which was not yet called
by the name of his faithful nurse.* Another person who'd stopped there
after many exhausting adventures was Íthacan Mácareus,
once a seasoned companion of much-enduring Ulysses.
Macareus spotted a friend, Achaeménides,* there with the Trojans,
someone abandoned long since by the Greeks on the rocks of Mount Etna
but rescued and taken on board by Aeneas. Astonished at suddenly
finding his former companion alive, 'What chance or what god
has preserved you?' he said to his old friend. 'How can a Greek be permitted
to sail in a Trojan vessel? What land are you heading for now?'
So Macareus asked; Achaemenides answered, no longer apparelled
in hairy clothing fastened by thorns, once more his own master:
'Listen, I'd rather remain on this ship than return to my home
in Ithaca. Force me to see Polyphémus* again, with his jaws
all dripping with human blood, if I'm telling a lie. I swear
that I hold Aeneas in greater respect than I hold my father.
I'll never be able to thank him enough, whatever I give him.
I speak and I breathe; I can see the sky and the sun's bright rays.
Could I fail to be grateful for that or ever forget what I owe him?

It's due to him that my life didn't vanish inside the mouth
of the Cyclops. If death overtakes me now, I shall still be
properly
buried, at least not swallowed inside the maw of that
monster.
'What were my feelings (except that fear had deprived me
entirely
of feeling and sense), when I saw you heading out to the
deep –
and was left behind? I wanted to shout for your help, but I
dared not
give my position away. The shouts of Ulysses had almost
destroyed your vessel. I watched Polyphemus tear an
enormous
piece of rock from the mountain and cast it into the waves.
I watched him hurling a second boulder; his giant's arm
had a catapult's power. I was desperately frightened the
ship would be sunk
by the wind gust caused by the rock or the backward wash
of a wave,
and forgot that I wasn't on board. But when your rowing
had saved you
from certain death, the Cyclops stumbled over Mount
Etna
groaning, groping his way through the woods and blindly
bumping
against the boulders. Stretching his gore-fouled arms in
the ocean's
direction, he cursed the whole Grecian race as he wildly
exclaimed:
"How I wish some chance would return me Ulysses or one
of his comrades
on whom my anger could rage, whose guts I'd devour and
whose living
body I'd tear apart, whose blood could flood the path
to my gullet, whose limbs would quiver beneath my teeth
as I crunched them!

With that the loss of my sight would count for little or nothing."
'All that and more in his fury; while I turned pale in a seizure
of horror, my gaze transfixed by the face still dripping with gore,
the violent hands and the sightless eye, the gargantuan limbs
and the beard all matted with human blood. Yes, death was before me;
but that was the least of my terrors. I thought he was going to seize me,
going at once to down my vitals inside his own;
and the picture stuck in my mind of the awful time when I'd seen him
grabbing my comrades, two at a time, and repeatedly dashing
their heads on the floor, then crouching lion-like over their bodies
to swallow the flesh and the guts, the bones full of succulent marrow,
the limbs still pulsing with life, down into that ravening belly.
I quivered like them and stood there, bloodless in grief, as I watched him
chewing and spewing his bloody feast and vomiting gobbets
of flesh in a splutter of neat wine. That was the fate I imagined
awaited me during those many days when I lurked in my hide-out,
trembling at every noise, both frightened and longing to die.
With acorns, grasses and leaves I kept starvation at bay,
helpless, hopeless and lonely, abandoned to death and to hardship.

Then after a long, long time I sighted this ship in the distance.
I waved my arms in a plea to be rescued, I ran to the shore,
and I moved their pity. A Greek was taken on board by Trojans!
Macareus, dearest of friends, now tell me your own adventures.
What of our leader, Ulysses? And what of the crew who were with you?'

MACAREUS' STORY: ULYSSES AND CIRCE

Macareus first explained how Ulysses had visited Aéolus,*
lord of the Tuscan Sea, who confines the winds in their prison.
To hasten his homeward voyage, the king had made him a special
present of all the winds tied firmly up in an ox-skin.
For nine whole days they had sailed with a favouring breeze behind them,
and Ithaca now was in sight. But on the following morning,
Ulysses' companions were overcome by rapacious envy;
thinking the skin carried gold, they untied the strings and released
the winds, which immediately swept their ship back over the sea
they had recently crossed and drove them again into Aeolus' harbour.
'From there,' Macareus continued, 'we sailed to the ancient city
of Laestrygónian Lamus, where King Antíphates ruled.
I, with two others, was sent to see him; but out of the three of us,
one companion and I succeeded in fleeing to safety.

The other was caught in Antiphates' cannibal jaws and coloured them
red with his blood. We were chased by the king and a crowd of excited
people behind him, who gathered and pelted the ships of Ulysses
with rocks and with branches, sinking the vessels and drowning the crews.
One ship, however, escaped, the one which was carrying me
and Ulysses himself. In distress at losing the bulk of our comrades
and sadly lamenting our lot, we finally came to the island
you see in the distance from here – I've been there myself and, believe me,
it's better observed from a distance. I warn you, most righteous of Trojans,
son of a goddess (the war is over, Aeneas, I cannot
call you a foe), stay firmly away from the island of Circe.
'We too, after mooring our ship on the shore of that dangerous island,
remembered Antiphates, not to mention the brutal Cyclops,
and so we refused to go on or to enter the house of a stranger.
But lots were cast, and a party consisting of me and the faithful
Polítes, Eurýlochus, boozy Elpénor,* with eighteen others,
was chosen to venture away from the shore to the palace of Circe.
As soon as we reached it and stood on the threshold, we cowered in terror
from hundreds of wolves, lionesses and she-bears rushing to greet us,

though none, in fact, gave cause for alarm or was likely to hurt us.
Far from it; they all were wagging their tails in the friendliest fashion
and licking our hands as we moved indoors, until we were welcomed
by female attendants, who guided us through a magnificent marble
hall to their mistress' presence. The goddess was throned on a splendid
chair in a beautiful apse and wearing a dazzling robe
wrapped round with a golden cloak. The nymphs and Néreïds by her
weren't carding the wool of a fleece or spinning thread in their fingers,
but sorting out grasses or neatly arranging a jumble of scattered
flowers, or herbs of various colours, in separate baskets.
Circe herself was directing the work, as she well understood
the use of the different leaves and how they ought to be blended,
keeping an eye on her women and checking the weight of each substance.
'As soon as she saw us and formal greetings had been exchanged,
she graciously smiled and reciprocated our kind good wishes,
then promptly ordered her nymphs to concoct a potion, consisting
of barley-grains, honey, a powerful wine and milk that had curdled.
To this she added some juices which wouldn't be noticed in so much
sweetness. We gladly accepted the cup from the goddess's hand
as our lips were parched. But as soon as we'd swallowed the potion down,

the sorceress touched the tops of our heads with her wand. In a moment
(I tell the tale to my shame) I started to prickle all over
with bristles.* My voice had deserted me; all the words I could utter
were snorting grunts. I was falling down to the earth, head first.
I could feel my nose and my mouth going hard in a long round snout;
my neck was swelling in folds of muscle; the hands which had lifted
the cup just now to my lips were marking the soil with hoof prints.
Others had suffered the same (those charms are so strong!) and I joined them,
penned in a sty. We saw that we all had been turned into swine –
except for Eurylochus. He alone had rejected the potion
and, had he not done so, I'd still be one of a herd of bristly
porkers today. Ulysses would never have learned from the man
of this dreadful disaster and come to save us from Circe's enchantment.
'Luckily, Mercury, god of peace, had given our leader
a flower which the gods call moly, a pure white flower with a black root.
Armed with that and the god's instructions, Ulysses entered
the palace of Circe and, when she offered her treacherous potion
and tried to caress his hair with her wand, to her startled amazement
he violently pushed her away and frightened her off with his drawn sword.

Solemn pledges were then exchanged: Ulysses was happy
to join fair Circe in bed, but insisted that she must restore
his friends to their normal shape to fulfil her part of the
bargain.
And so we were sprinkled with juice from a strange but
rather more wholesome
herb and firmly struck on the head with a blow from the
other
end of her wand, while a spell commuted her curse to a
blessing.
And while her chanting continued, our bodies gradually
rose
till we stood on our feet, our bristles fell off, the cracks in
our cloven
trotters were gone, our shoulders returned, and we found
we had upper arms,
elbows and forearms. Ulysses was weeping; we wept
ourselves
as we fondly embraced him and clung to his neck. The first
of the new-found
words that we uttered expressed our heartfelt thanks to our
leader.

MACAREUS' STORY: PICUS, CANENS AND CIRCE

'We stayed in Circe's house for a year, and during that long
time
I was a witness to many sights and heard many stories.
These included a tale which was told me in private by one
of the four attendants whom Circe employed in her
magical rites.
One day, while her mistress was idly dawdling alone with
Ulysses,
this nice nymph showed me a statue, carved in the whitest
of marble,

portraying a man with a woodpecker perched on top of his head.
The statue was set in a shrine and festooned with garlands. Curious
to know, I enquired who the young man was and why he was worshipped
there in the shrine and why he carried that bird on his head.
"I'll tell you, Macareus," answered the girl; "it's another example
of Circe's magic. So please attend while I try to explain.
'"Picus,* the offspring of Saturn, was once the king in the land
of Ausónia. Horses for battle in war were his passionate interest.
This statue shows how he looked as a man. You can see for yourself
how handsome he was and admire his mien on the strength of his portrait.
His person was matched by his fineness of nature. He wasn't yet twenty
and couldn't have watched the Olympics in Elis as many as four times.
His wonderful looks attracted the dryads born in the mountains
of Látium; the nymphs of the fountains sighed for him too; and the naiads
who dwell in the Alban Tiber, the streams of Numícius or Ánio,
Almo whose course is the shortest, cascading Nar, or the shady
waters of Farfa; and others whose haunts are Tauric Diana's
woodland pool* or the lakes nearby. But Picus rejected them
all and courted a nymph whom Venília bore, so they say,

long ages ago on the Pálatine hill to two-headed Janus.
As soon as this beautiful girl was old enough to be married,
they gave her away to the favoured suitor, Lauréntian Picus.
Though rare in beauty, in singing's arts she was rarer yet,
so her name was Cánens, the singer.* She'd move the trees and the rocks,
she'd calm the fiercest of beasts, she would slow the course of the longest
rivers and halt the birds on the wing with her musical singing.
'"One day, when Canens was trilling at home in her lovely soprano,
Picus went out to the fields of Lauréntum to chase the boar.
He was riding his mettled steed, two hunting-spears in his left hand,
wearing a scarlet cloak with a golden brooch on his shoulder.
It chanced that Circe had also entered the woods at the same time,
leaving the fields called after her name in order to gather
new herbs on the fertile hills. As soon as she saw young Picus
from where she was hidden inside a thicket, her breath was completely
taken away. She dropped the herbs she had carefully gathered
and felt the flames of passion pervading the whole of her being.
Once the heat had subsided a little and she had recovered
her senses, she longed to confess her desire but couldn't approach him
because of his galloping horse and all of his thronging attendants.
'The wind may snatch you away,' she said, 'but you shan't escape me,
if only I know myself, if the magical power of my herbs

hasn't vanished entirely, if all the spells I can chant don't fail me.'
So saying, she conjured up an illusion, a phantom boar,
which she ordered to scamper across the trail in the king's full view
and appear to enter the wood where the trees were thickest, the ground
was cluttered with fallen trunks and a horse couldn't possibly pass through.
Picus was fooled and at once went after this ghost of a quarry.
He quickly leapt to the ground from his foaming steed and wandered
on foot through the depths of the wood in pursuit of an empty hope.
'"Meanwhile, fair Circe was framing her prayers in sorcery's language,
worshipping unknown gods in outlandish charms which she commonly
used to obscure the face of a silvery moon or to weave
a curtain of rain-sodden clouds beneath her father, the sun god.
So it was then as she chanted her spell: the heavens were darkened,
mist steamed up from the earth, and all the king's followers blindly
wandered and trailed through the wood, so that none was left to protect him.
Circe now had contrived the time and the place for her ambush.
'I appeal to you, Picus,' she said, 'by your eyes which have captured my own,
by your beauty, most handsome of men, which compels me, though I am a goddess,
to kneel at your feet, be kind to my passion. Accept the all-seeing
Sun as your father, don't cruelly scorn the Titaness Circe!'

'"But Picus firmly rejected both Circe herself and her prayers.
'Whoever you are,' he replied, 'I cannot be yours, as another
has captured and holds my heart in her keeping. I pray she retains it
for ever and ever. I cannot be false to the vows of my marriage,
so long as the fates preserve me the daughter of Janus, my Canens.'
Circe appealed to Picus again many times to no purpose.
'Your hardness will cost you dear,' she exclaimed. 'Your Canens shall never
see you again. You'll learn what a woman in love who is injured
can do; and Circe is surely an injured woman in love!'
The sorceress then turned twice to the west and twice to the east;
she struck the young king with her wand three times, and she spoke three spells.
Picus took to his heels but soon was surprised to discover
himself running faster than usual. Wings had sprung from his body!
A new type of bird had suddenly joined the forests of Latium.
Furious to find it was he, he pecked at the wild tree-trunks
with his hard beak, angrily dealing wounds in the length of the branches.
His wings had taken the hue of his scarlet cloak, and the golden
brooch with the pin which had gripped his garments was turned into plumage.
His neck was ringed with a circle of golden yellow, and nothing
remained of his former self but the name of the woodpecker, *picus*.
'"Meanwhile, the attendants of Picus who'd frequently shouted in vain

for their master over the countryside and had found him nowhere,
came upon Circe, who'd cleared the sky by this time and permitted
the mists to disperse in the sun and the wind. They plied her with questions,
accused her of what she had actually done and demanded their king back.
Force was threatened; their pointed swords were ready for action,
when Circe sprinkled a noxious substance and poisonous juices
upon them, summoning Night and the powers of darkness from Chaos
and Érebus, praying to Hécate, goddess of witchcraft, in drawn-out
wailing and shrieks. Then, wonder of wonders, the woods all jumped,
the earth gave a rumbling groan, and the trees in the glade turned yellow.
The poison-bespattered grass was running with droplets of blood.
It appeared that the rocks were hoarsely bellowing, dogs were barking,
the earth was crawling with rough-scaled serpents as black as the night,
and the air was filled with the flitting ghosts of the silent departed.
The party of men was appalled by these hideous marvels. Then Circe
touched their wondering faces of fear with her poisoned wand.
They succumbed to her magic; the poor young men were transformed to a medley
of monstrous beasts, and none of them kept his normal appearance.

'"The fiery sun had set in the west on the shores of Tartéssus.

Canens was anxiously waiting and watching out for her husband
the king, but he hadn't returned. Search parties of servants and townsfolk
scoured the forest in all directions with torches to find him.
It wasn't enough for the nymph to be weeping or tearing her tresses
or beating her breasts (though she did every one of those things), but she rushed
right out of the palace and roamed distractedly over Latium.
For six long days and for six long nights she travelled at random,
without any food and without any sleep, through the hills and the valleys.
She finally came to the Tiber, who saw her, exhausted by sorrow
and all her travels, prostrating her limbs on the bank of his long stream.
There, as she wept, she vented even her grief in an aria*
sung in a soft, faint voice to express her despair, as we sometimes
listen ourselves to the funeral dirge of the dying swan.
In conclusion, her tender marrow was turned to water by mourning;
she wasted and, little by little, she vanished away into nothing.
Her fame, however, is marked by the spot which the ancient Muses
fitly called Canens, after the name of the musical nymph."

'Such were the many stories I heard and the sights that I saw
in that tedious year. Doing nothing had made us sluggish and slow,
when they told us to launch our vessels and spread our sails once again.
Circe had warned that our purposed voyage would be long and uncertain,

and detailed the dangers still to be faced on the cruel sea.
I was scared, I admit; and once I arrived in this country, I
stayed.'

THE WANDERINGS OF AENEAS (4)

Macareus' story was ended. An urn with Aeneas' nurse's
ashes was laid in a marble tomb, with this brief inscription:

HERE LIES CAIÉTA. SHE NURSED A HERO
RENOWNED FOR HIS GOODNESS.
HE SAVED HER FROM TROY'S GREAT FIRE AND
GAVE HER THE FIRE THAT HE OWED HER.

The cable which moored Aeneas' ship to a grassy embankment
was now cast off. The sailors kept well away from the treacherous
island and palace of infamous Circe and made for the woods
where the yellow sands of the shady Tiber invade the ocean.
And here Aeneas was given a home and pledged a daughter
in marriage by Faunus' offspring Latínus* – but not without conflict.
A war broke out with a savage people, whose champion Turnus
struggled with reckless fury to win the bride he'd been promised.
Latium clashed with the whole of Etrúria; many an anxious
day was spent in the heat of battle for hard-won victory.

THE MUTINOUS COMPANIONS OF DIOMEDES

Each side was supported by help from abroad. The clans were gathered
to back the Rutúlians; many defended the Trojan camp.
Aeneas appealed with success to Evánder,* the king of Pallánteum;
Vénulus fared less well when he entered the walls of the exiled
King Diomédes, who'd actually founded a spacious city
and occupied land as a dowry from Iapýgian Daunus.
However, when Venulus boldly delivered his message from Turnus
and asked for his aid, Diomedes flatly refused it and pleaded
his weakness: he couldn't commit himself or the subjects of Daunus,
his father-in-law, to a fight, and he had no men of his own Greek
people to arm for a war. 'These aren't false pretexts,' he added.
'I'll bring myself to explain, although my sadness and sorrow
are reawakened when I recall them. Ilium's towers
had been burnt to the ground and Troy devoured by the Grecian flames;
Narýcian Ajax* had brutally forced the virgin Cassándra
away from the shrine of the virgin Athena and raped her, bringing
on all of the Greeks the punishment owed to none but himself.
So our fleet was scattered and forced by winds on the hostile ocean

to face the lightning, the dark and the rain, to endure the full fury
of sea and of sky and be finally wrecked on the rocks of Caphéreus.
I won't delay you by telling the whole sad story in detail,
but Greece at that time might even have moved King Priam to tears.
Though I was rescued and snatched from the waves through the care of the warrior
goddess Athena, yet once again, I was forced to abandon
my father's estate in Argos, as kindly Venus remembered
the wound I dealt her at Troy long ago* and made me atone
for her injury now. I have lived through such great trials on the deep
and in battles on land, that I've often declared those others were lucky
who perished beneath the waves by Caphereus' merciless cape
in the storm which attacked us all, and wished I had gone down too.
'My companions had suffered all they could take on sea or in battle;
morale had collapsed and they now demanded an end to their wanderings.
But Acmon, whose hot-headed nature was chafed even more by disaster,
protested. "Sailors!" he said, "what's left to encounter that lies
beyond your endurance to bear? What further damage can Venus
inflict, supposing she wanted to? Prayers can avail, if worse
is *yet* to be feared; but when the worst has already occurred,

fear lies at our feet and the crown of misfortune is freedom
from care.
No matter if Venus can hear my words; never mind if she
loathes
Diomedes' crew to a man; we can treat her loathing with
scorn
to a man. Her power may be great, but it counts for little
with *us*!"
Such were the taunting words with which the insolent
Acmon
goaded the goddess and quickly revived her inveterate
anger.
More of his friends reproved him for what he had said
than the few
who agreed. When he tried to respond to our strictures, his
voice grew thin
as his throat grew thin. His hair was turned into feathers;
his breast,
his back and his new-shaped neck were also covered with
plumage.
His arms expanded and bent at the elbows to form light
wings;
his toes disappeared in the rest of his large webbed feet;
and his mouth
went stiff as it hardened to horn and tapered into a sharp
point.
Lycus stared at Acmon in wonder and so did Idas;
so did Rhexénor, Nýcteus and Abas; and while they were
staring,
they all took on the same likeness. Most of my crew
flew up
from the ship and circled around the oars as they flapped
their wings.
If you ask what these strange new birds were like, I can only
tell you
that, while they were different from swans, they resembled
the swan very closely.

The story explains why, although I can call King Daunus my father
by marriage, this settlement takes some trouble to rule, and I plough
these drought-stricken fields with a tiny remnant of people to help me.'

THE APULIAN SHEPHERD

Thus far Diomedes; so Venulus left the Apúlian kingdom
and passed the Peucétian gulf and Messápian fields. On his journey
he sighted a cave, well shaded by woods and dripping with water,
which now is the home of the half-goat Pan and once had belonged
to the nymphs. One day these spirits were chased from their cave in a fright
by a local shepherd, who scared them at first with his sudden arrival;
but soon, when their courage returned and they saw that their doltish pursuer
could well be ignored, they joined once more in their rhythmical dancing.
The shepherd then jeered and jumped about in a crude imitation;
what's more, he clownishly scoffed at their rites with obscene abuse.
He never stopped shouting his insults, until his mouth was obstructed
by what he is now – by a tree; and the fruit will tell you its nature.
The mark of his tongue survives in the bitter tang of wild olive
berries; his roughness of language passed into tartness of flavour.

THE SHIPS OF AENEAS

After the envoys returned to Turnus and brought Diomedes'
refusal to help, the Rutulians pressed ahead with their purposed
war without his support. Much bloodshed followed on both sides.
Suddenly Turnus attacked the pinewood ships of the Trojans
with ravening torches, and timbers previously spared on the water
now were threatened with fire. The flames were already at work
on the pitch, the wax and the other combustible matter on board;
they were mounting the lofty masts to the sails, and the benches crossing
the rounded hulls were starting to smoke, when the thought occurred
to Cýbele, known as the holy mother of all the gods,
that the pine composing these ships had been felled on the peaks of Mount Ida.*
She filled the air with the clashing of cymbals and skirling of boxwood
pipes, then riding across the sky in her lion-drawn chariot,
'Turnus,' she shouted, 'you impious man, you are throwing those torches
in vain! I will rescue those ships, as I cannot allow the consuming
flames to devour any root or branch of my sacred forest.'
A clap of thunder as Cybele spoke! Its rolling subsided,
then torrents of rain and of bouncing hailstones burst from the clouds.
The storm winds suddenly clashed; great chaos reigned in the sky
and over the swollen sea as the brothers engaged in their battle.

The earth-mother goddess employed the strength of one of the gales
to snap the hempen cables which moored the Phrygian vessels,
to force the ships forward and plunge them all in the midst of the waves.
As the wood in them gradually softened, the boats were changed into bodies,
the rounded sterns were transformed into heads, and the oars vanished into
the legs and toes of a swimmer. The sides continued as sides,
and the keel down the middle below was altered to serve as a backbone.
Rigging became soft hair, and arms appeared on the sail-yards.
The colour was still sea-green. The ships were nymphs of the ocean,
girlishly playing among the waves which had formerly scared them.
Although they had started their lives as trees on the rock-hard mountains,
they haunted the yielding waves without any thought of their birthplace.
But none of them ever forgot the many dangers they'd faced
and endured on the cruel sea; so their hands would often support
any vessels caught in a storm, except those carrying Greeks.
They still remembered the sack of Troy and detested the Argives.
Their faces lit up with delight when they sighted the fragments of wreckage
which came from Ulysses' ship, and were equally glad when they saw
Alcínoüs' bark* grow hard with the rock encrusting its timbers.

ARDEA

Now that the fleet was transformed into living sea-nymphs, the Trojans
hoped that Turnus, in fear of this portent, might halt the fighting.
But Turnus went on. There were gods on both sides and, no less important,
the men had their courage to help them. They weren't any longer pursuing
Lavinia's hand, with the kingdom and throne of her father for dowry;
they simply wanted to win and continued the fight as they felt
too ashamed to abandon it now. Eventually Venus saw
Aeneas' victory assured, while Turnus fell in the battle.
Árdea fell, a powerful city in Turnus' lifetime.
After the Trojan torches had razed her walls to the ground
and her ruined buildings were smothered in piles of smouldering ashes,
a bird never seen before flew up from the midst of the rubble,
lashing the embers with flapping wings. The cries of sorrow,
the lean, pale faces and all that betokens a captured city
survived in that bird; yes, even the name, as the heron called *ardea*
beats her wings in her grief for the city from which she arose.

THE APOTHEOSIS OF AENEAS

Aeneas' courage by now had compelled the gods, including
Juno herself, to end the anger they'd nursed so long.
Iúlus was reaching his prime and his fortunes were firmly established.
So Venus' heroic son was ripe for translation to heaven.

Venus had canvassed the body of gods and, throwing her arms
round Jupiter's neck, had said to him: 'Dearest father, you've never
been harsh or unyielding to *me*; now be at your kindest, I beg you.
Please help my Aeneas, your grandson born of our blood divine,
and make him a god, no matter how humble, O highest of gods,
so long as he joins our ranks. He already has seen the unlovely
kingdom of Hades and crossed the Styx. Is once not enough?'
The gods all agreed, and even Queen Juno's reaction to Venus
was far from impassive; she gave her consent with a gracious smile.
Then Jupiter answered his daughter: 'This grant of heavenly status
is due to Aeneas and you who apply for it. Take what you ask for!'
Venus was simply delighted and thanked her father profusely.
Then riding her chariot, drawn by doves, through the gentle breezes,
she duly arrived on the Laúrentine coast, where the river Numicius
snakes on its course with its mantle of reeds to the neighbouring sea.
She asked it to wash away whatever parts of Aeneas
were subject to death and silently carry them down to the ocean.
The horned god did as Venus commanded, and used his own waters
to sprinkle Aeneas and cleanse his nature of all that was mortal,

while leaving him all that was best. His mother anointed his purified
body with fragrance divine and touched his lips with ambrosia
mingled with nectar. She made him a god, whom Romulus' people
titled Índiges, Native, and honoured with temple and altars.

AENEAS' DESCENDANTS

So Alba and Latium thereafter were under the rule of Iulus,
also known as Ascánius. He was succeeded by Sílvius,
whose son Latinus also came to the throne of the ancient
king of the same name. After Latinus, illustrious Alba.
Épytus next; and he was followed by Cápetus, Capys
(though Capys came first) and then Tiberínus, who ruled for a while
but was drowned in a Tuscan stream and gave his name to the river.
He had two sons: first Rémulus, second the warlike Ácrota.
The elder, Remulus, tried to mimic the thunder and lightning
and died when struck by a lightning bolt. The more temperate brother,
Acrota, handed the kingdom over to brave Aventínus,
who reigned on the hill which is called by his name and is where he was buried.

POMONA AND VERTUMNUS

At the time of this story, Proca was ruling the Palatine people.*
Pomóna, the goddess of fruits, was one of the dryads of Latium
during the reign of this king; and none was more skilful a gardener

or more devoted to cultivating the various fruit trees.
Hence her name of Pomona. She showed no love for the forests
or rivers, but only for orchards and trees with fruit on their branches.
She never wielded a hunting-spear but a pruning-hook,
with which she would check luxuriant growth and prevent any branches
from spreading too wildly; or else she would use it for splitting the bark
to engraft a cutting and offer the sap to an alien shoot.
She'd never allow her plants to be thirsty but watered the greedy
Roots with trickling channels to feed their flexible fibres.
This was her love and her passion; she had no interest in Venus.
Indeed in her fear of assault by some peasant, she fenced her orchard
And stayed inside it to shun and forestall all contact with men.
What didn't they do to possess her – those lecherous dancers, the satyrs,
The Pans with their horns encircled by wreaths of pine, pot-bellied
Silénus who always acted too young for his old man's years,
And Priápus,* the god who terrifies thieves with his knife or his phallus!

One spirit was more in love with Pomona than all of these others,
but didn't succeed any better. Vertúmnus, 'the Turner',* was always
appearing in different disguises. He'd come in the garb of a rugged
reaper, with ears of corn in a trug, and was very convincing!

Or else, if you saw the fresh-cut hay in a band on his forehead,
you'd think he'd been tossing the new-mown grass like a genuine haymaker.
Often he'd carry a goad in his hard rough hand; you could honestly
call him a ploughman who'd just unyoked his exhausted oxen.
Give him a hook and he might be a pruner or stripper of vines;
a ladder to carry, and off he'd be going to harvest the apples.
All these forms he adopted again and again to get close
to Pomona and so to enjoy the sight of her beautiful person.
One day he even put on a grey wig with a bright-coloured headscarf,
crouched down over a stick and pretended to be an old woman.
He entered the orchard, admired the apples and said to Pomona,
'They make you all the more tempting!'; then followed this compliment up
by kissing her once or twice on the lips as a real old woman
would never have done. Next, resting her tired, bowed back on the earth,
the hag looked up at the branches, bowed with the fruits of the autumn.
'You see that elm tree,' she said, 'supporting the beautiful clusters
of shiny grapes? How lovely it looks with the vine it belongs to!
Supposing that trunk were a bachelor, without the shoots which entwine it,
there'd be no reason, apart from its leaves, to look for its company.
So with the vine which happily rests in the arms of the elm tree:

unmarried, it simply would trail on the ground with the earth for its pillow.
You, my dear, don't seem to respond to the vine's example.
You need to mate, to belong to a man, but you show no interest.
If only you *would* desire it! You'd have more suitors then Helen,
or Hippodamía, who caused the fight of the Lapiths and centaurs.
Even now, though you shrink and turn from your wooers in loathing,
a thousand men are longing to have you, gods and demigods,
all the spirits that make their homes in the Alban hills.*
Pomona, won't you be sensible? Take an old woman's advice
and make a good match! I love you more than all of the others,
more indeed than you think. Have nothing to do with those common
admirers, but choose Vertumnus to share your bed. You can take
my word for his honour. I know him as well as he knows himself.
He doesn't wander all over the world in search of new women;
he sticks to his own patch. Nor does he fall in love with the latest
girl he has seen, like most of your suitors. *You*'ll be his passion,
his first and his last; he'll devote his life entirely to *you*.
'What's more, he is young and he's blessed by nature with wonderful looks;
he can change into any form that he likes to suit the occasion.

He'll be whatever you tell him to be, no matter how strange.
You like the same things; he's the first to get hold of the
apples you grow,
and adores to feel them inside his hand. But neither the fruit
which is plucked from your trees, nor the succulent grass
which grows in your garden,
nothing at all is the slightest interest to him but you.
Pity his passion. Imagine your lover is standing before you
in person and speaking through me to implore your
bountiful favour.
Remember, the gods are vindictive; unyielding hearts are
detested
by Venus; Némesis never forgets and her wrath is relentless.
And now, to add to your fear, since my age has allowed
me to know
many things, I shall tell you a story familiar all over Cyprus.
I hope it will soften your heart and make you more easy to
win.

IPHIS AND ANAXARETE

'Iphis, a youth of inferior birth, had seen Anaxárete,
who was a proud princess in the line of Teucer's
descendants,
and fallen deeply in love. For long he struggled against it,
but found he was quite unable to conquer his passion by
reason.
He therefore went to the lady's house to plead for her pity.
He tried to open his bleeding heart to her nurse, whom he
earnestly
begged, by her hopes for the child she had reared, to show
him some kindness.
He also attempted to charm each one of the numerous
servants
and asked them in anxious tones to lend their weight to
his wooing.

He'd often present them with sweet love-letters to take to their mistress;
or else he'd festoon the posts at the palace entrance with garlands
bedewed with his tears and impetuously throw himself down on the threshold,
soft against hard, where he gloomily rained abuse on the door-bolts.
But she was more harsh than the rising waves in the stormy season,
tougher than iron that is smelted by fire in Nóricum's* forges,
harder than living rock still firmly embedded in earth.
She scorned her lover and savagely mocked him. Her merciless deeds
were backed by her arrogant words, till even his hopes were extinguished.
Iphis could take no more of this cruel, protracted torture,
and these were the final words that he spoke on his mistress' doorstep:
'"You win, Anaxarete! No need now to be vexed any more
by my wearisome wooing. I'm finished. Enjoy your glorious triumph,
invoke Apollo and wreathe your head in glistening laurel.
You win, and I gladly die. Be happy, then, heart of iron!
At least you'll have something to praise in my love, some small satisfaction,
something to make you acknowledge my service. Yet always remember,
my fondness for you never ended until I had ended my life.
In the sun and your eyes I shall lose two lights at a single moment.

It won't be a rumour that brings you the news of my death.
To remove
all doubt of it, *I* shall be there. You will see me in person
before you.
I want your unfeeling eyes to feast on my lifeless body.
O gods, if you look on the actions of mortals, remember
poor Iphis
(there's nothing else that my feeble tongue has the strength
to implore),
and ensure that my story is told right down the length of
the ages.
Restore the years you have taken away from my life to my
fame!"
'So speaking, he lifted his streaming eyes and his pale
white arms
to the parts of the palace doors he had often adorned with
his garlands,
and said, as he tied a noose to the beam surmounting the
entrance,
"This garland will give you pleasure, you cruel and
faithless girl!"
He thrust his head, still facing towards her, inside the noose,
and at once he was strangled, his luckless body suspended
in air.
The drum of his quivering feet on the door made a knock,
as of someone
demanding to enter the house. When the servants answered
the summons,
they were able to see what had happened and cried aloud in
dismay.
They lifted the body out of the halter – but all to no
purpose –
and carried it back to his mother's threshold (his father was
dead).
The woman enfolded her son's cold limbs in a loving
embrace;
then after she'd uttered her cries and performed her ritual
gestures

of mourning, she led the gloomy cortège through the heart of the city,
bearing the death-pale corpse on a bier to the funeral pyre.
'By chance, Anaxarete's house was close to the street where the woeful
procession was passing. The sounds of lament came through to the ears
of the hard princess, whom a vengeful god was already pursuing.
Moved, in spite of her nature, she said, "Let us take a look
at the funeral train," and climbed aloft to watch through a window.
She'd hardly caught sight of Iphis' corpse laid out on the bier,
when her eyes glazed over and froze, the warm blood fled from her body,
her skin turned horribly pale. She attempted to step right back,
but her feet were stuck where they were. Then she tried to avert her gaze
and failed once again. Little by little, the stone which had always
been there in her hard, cold heart took over the whole of her body.
To prove this isn't an idle fiction, Sálamis still
preserves Anaxarete's statue. It also possesses a shrine
dedicated to Venus the Watcher.* My dear Pomona, I beg you,
remember this story. Abandon your proud, slow-yielding resistance,
and give yourself to your lover. If you will take my advice,
I shall pray that the frosts in the spring won't nip the buds on your trees,

nor the blasts of the wind shake off the fruit when it ripens
in autumn.'

Thus the god disguised as a crone appealed to Pomona,
but all in vain. He returned to his young man's guise and
discarded
the old woman's trappings. The vision that now confronted
the maid
was like the brilliant face of the Sun, when he clears the
obstructing
clouds and shines once again with his glory fully revealed.
Vertumnus was ready to force his will, but force wasn't
needed;
the nymph was entranced by his radiant form and
responded with passion.

ROMULUS

Proca was followed as king by Amúlius.* He had unjustly
seized the Ausónian state by force of arms from his brother.
Númitor later recovered the throne with the aid of his
grandson,
Rómulus. So, on the feast of Pales, the god of the shepherds,
the walls of the city of Rome were founded. A war was
then started
by Tátius the Sabine, leading the fathers of women
abducted
by Romulus' men. Tarpeía,* who'd opened a path to the
fortress,
deservedly lost her life as the shields of the enemy crushed
her.
From there the Sabines, hushed and silent as wolves on the
prowl,
came down on the Romans while they were dead to the
world, and made for
the gates of the city, which Ília's son had firmly secured.

But one had been noiselessly turned on its hinges and opened by Juno,
and only Venus had noticed the fall of the bars. She'd have closed it,
but gods are never allowed to undo the work of each other.
Now close to this gate and to Janus' shrine* the Ausonian naiads
lived by an icy spring. When Venus requested their aid,
her plea was too just for the nymphs to refuse, and they willingly called
on their spring to pour through all of its channels. However, the water
had not yet cut off the route which led to the open gateway
of two-headed Janus. So yellow sulphur was placed in the gushing
spring and the underground courses were fired with smoking pitch.
The heat generated by these and other materials found
its way to the depths of the spring, so that waters which once had competed
with Alpine cold were now as hot as a fire can burn.
The posts at the temple doors were steaming with flaming spray;
and the open gate, where the rugged Sabines had vainly been promised
entry by Juno, was blocked by this strange new spring, till the Roman
soldiers had time to arm. Then Romulus took the offensive
and soon the bodies of Sabines and Romans were strewn on the ground,
while fathers whose daughters our people had raped were godlessly shedding
the blood of their sons, and sons were shedding the blood of their fathers.

But peace was eventually made. They decided not to continue
the fight to the end, and the royal power was divided with Tatius.

THE APOTHEOSIS OF ROMULUS

After the death of Tatius, Romulus reigned on his own
over Roman and Sabine alike. Then Mars respectfully doffed
his helmet and thus addressed the father of gods and of men:
'My father, since Rome is firmly established on grand foundations
and ruled again by a single leader, the time has arrived
to pay the reward already promised to me and your worthy
grandson, by raising him up from the earth to a place in the heavens.
May I remind you of words that you spoke long ago in the presence
of all the gods in council, those fatherly words that I
have faithfully treasured: "One man there shall be whom thou wilt uplift
to the azure blue of the sky." Now let those words be fulfilled!'
The omnipotent father nodded assent. The heavens were veiled
in a mantle of clouds, and the world was confounded by thunder and lightning.
Mars knew that these signs foreboded his own son's promised translation.
He leant on his spear and fearlessly mounted his chariot, drawn
by steeds pressed under his blood-stained yoke; then he gave them a lash

of his cracking whip, and glided headlong down through the air,
till he came to a halt on the top of the wooded Palatine Hill,
where Ilia's son was humanely dispensing justice amongst
his citizen people, and carried him off. The hero's mortal
825 body dissolved on his upward path, as a leaden pellet
shot from a broad sling melts away in the midst of the sky.
A glorious form took its place, more worthy of gods on their high-placed
couches,* the form of Quirínus* arrayed in his toga of honour.

Hersílië, Romulus' wife, was bewailing her husband as lost,
when queenly Juno commanded Iris to follow her
830 rainbow
path right down to the earth and to bear the widow these orders:
'Lady, chief glory of all the Latian and Sabine peoples,
most worthy once to have been the wife of so mighty a hero
and now the wife of Quirinus, I bid you cease your lamenting.
And if you are still desirous of seeing your late lord,
835 follow me
up to the grave on Quirinus' hill, where his temple is shaded
by verdant trees.'* So Iris obeyed and, gliding down
to the earth on her rainbow, she brought Hersilië Juno's message.
The woman was bashful and scarcely could raise her
840 eyes, but responded,
'Goddess (I cannot say who you are, but you must be a goddess),

lead, oh lead me, I pray you, and show me the face of my husband.
If fate will allow me only to see him once, I shall boast
that I have been lifted to heaven!' Post-haste, with Iris beside her,
she came to Romulus' hill. And there, from above them, a shooting
star swooped down to the earth. Her hair ablaze with its fire,
Hersilië, joining the star, rose up to the sky, to be welcomed
into the long-familiar arms of the founder of Rome.
He changed her bodily form and also gave her a new name,
Hora. So now she's a goddess and one with Quirinus for ever.

BOOK 15

Though not the most immediately accessible book in the *Metamorphoses*, Book 15 is certainly one of the most interesting. In the second part (from 479) Ovid uses a skilful foreshadowing technique to build towards his climactic Roman episode (see notes on 534 and 589). For the political dimension see the Introduction, p. xviii.

In *Myscelus* (1–59), we learn how Romulus' successor, King Numa, extended his mind as a younger man by travelling to Croton in southern Italy, a Greek city whose foundation from Argos is explained by a local elder in the story of Myscelus. The speaker goes on to tell Numa about the famous Greek philosopher *Pythagoras* (60–478), who settled at Croton but is presumed by Ovid, quite unhistorically, to have done so before the time of Numa's visit. We are then treated to a discourse, purporting to come from the lips of Pythagoras, which offers a structural counterpart to Ovid's account of the Creation in Book 1 and marks a return to the didactic mode of Lucretius and of Virgil's *Georgics*. Pythagoras is essentially the mouthpiece for a discussion by Ovid on change as a fundamental principle in nature. However, it starts and ends with a plea for vegetarianism, based on the famous Pythagorean doctrine of Metempsychosis or Reincarnation, which implies that animal slaughter may mean dispossessing the soul of some relative. The idea of the soul moving from one body to another introduces a long series of examples of change, including the annual seasons, the ageing human body and various other phenomena, of a factual or miraculous kind, which Ovid has derived from Hellenistic scholarship. The list culminates in the rise and fall of civiliza-

tions, leading inevitably to Rome as a growing power. The arrangement of Ovid's examples is not always clearly defined; but this section makes compelling reading, because the detail, even if somewhat recondite, is always vividly imagined. Ovid is not a philosopher in his own right, but he makes fascinating use of this opportunity to carry his theme of metamorphosis back into the genre of didactic, as distinct from narrative, poetry.

Egeria and Hippolytus (479–551) returns us once more to the world of Greek tragedy. After Numa's death, an attempt is made to comfort his grieving widow by Hippolytus, the revived hero of Euripides' play, on the grounds that his sufferings were far worse than hers. In this we are bound to enjoy Ovid's version of the messenger-speech which narrates Hippolytus' destruction by the bull that comes in from the sea.

Two mini-metamorphoses from Etruscan and Roman legend, *Tages* (552–9) and *Romulus' Spear* (560–64), are followed by the story of *Cipus* (565–621), who was designated by an omen for kingship but rejected the opportunity as he abominated the thought of tyranny. *Aesculapius* (622–744) tells how the god of healing abandoned his shrine at Epidaurus, in the form of a huge snake, for a new home in the heart of Rome. Ovid's narrative is now moving closer to his 'own lifetime' (1.4), as the plague, which led the Romans to fetch the god, was a historical event of the early third century BC; but the story-telling preserves a mythical quality and the religious atmosphere provides an appropriately grand lead into the final episode.

The Apotheosis of Julius Caesar (745–870), whose murder occurred only a year before Ovid was born, is not easy to evaluate. The description of the sinister omens which preceded the assassination is deeply impressive. But how should we interpret the poet's extravagant praise of the emperor Augustus and the odd touch of irreverent humour which continues to mark his characterization of the gods? Readers who have found their way to the end of this monumental work may wish to explore this question in further reading. At all events, they will admit the claim in Ovid's *Epilogue* (871–9) that his achievement in the *Metamorphoses* is indestructible and lives 'throughout all ages'.

MYSCELUS

Meanwhile, an enquiry:* who could sustain the awesome burden
of power and come to Rómulus' throne as a worthy successor?*
The excellent man marked out by prescient rumour for kingship
was Núma, a capable thinker, who wasn't content with having
researched the religious rites of the Sabines. His restless, ambitious
mind led him on to explore the mysteries of nature* itself.
This passionate interest made him forsake his birthplace at Cúres
and find his way to the city of Croton, whose walls were erected
close to where Hercules long in the past had stayed as a guest.
On arrival, Numa enquired who had founded a new Greek town
on Italian soil, and received this answer from one of the elders
born and bred in the place and thus well versed in its history:
'The story goes that when Hercules left the Ocean, with Géryon's
cattle from Spain as his prize, he was safely brought to the coast
of Lacínium. There, while his herd was grazing the soft green pasture,
he entered great Croton's house to receive a hospitable welcome
and so was able to rest at the end of his arduous labour.
He said to his host as he took his leave, "One day in the future

this place will be home to a city." That promise was
faithfully kept.
'In Argos there once was a man called Mýscelus, son of
Alémon.
No one of his generation was better esteemed by the gods.
One night, as he lay asleep, the Club-Bearer* came to his
bedside
and, leaning over him, said, "Rise, leave the home of your
fathers.
Go and travel afar to the stony stream of the Aesar.*
Many terrible things will ensue if you fail to obey me."
Hercules then departed and Myscelus woke. He instantly
rose from his bed and silently brooded over the dream
he had just been sent. A long debate took place in his
mind:
a god was bidding him go, but the laws of his country
forbade it,
and death was prescribed for a person who wished to
abandon his homeland.
After the sun had hidden his shining head in the ocean
and darkest night was crowned once more by the stars in
the heavens,
the god appeared in a second dream and repeated his order,
with threats of further disaster and worse if he wasn't
obeyed.
'So Myscelus, deeply frightened, made ready to move his
ancestral
shrine to a new abode; but a rumour went round, and the
townsfolk
put him on trial for contempt of the law. When the case
against him
was fully made and the charge was proved without a
requirement
to call any witness, the poor defendant, in suppliant rags,
uplifted his hands and his face to the sky and appealed to
Hercules:
"Hero whose twelve great labours secured your title to
heaven,

help me, I pray you, now. My crime was prompted by you!"
Now the custom in ancient times was for jurors to vote for a verdict
with black and white pebbles, black for conviction and white for acquittal.
This procedure was followed at Myscelus' trial, when every
one of the pebbles cast in the urn was black for conviction.
But after the pot was turned and the votes fell out to be counted,
all of the pebbles were found to have changed from black to white.
Thus Hercules' intervention ensured that the son of Alemon
was duly acquitted. Myscelus thanked the god for his goodness
and then, with the wind behind him, he sailed across the Ionian
Sea. His route* took him past Nerétum, the Sállentine city,
Spartan Taréntum, the bay of Siris, Sýbaris, Crímese,
Iapyx' country too; and finally, while he was skirting
the coastline, he found his destiny close to the mouth of the Aesar.
Not far from there was a mound where Croton's hallowed remains
lay buried in earth; and on that site, as the god had commanded,
Myscelus founded a town called after the man who was buried there.
That, according to ancient tradition, explains this city's
beginnings and how it came to be built on Italian soil.

PYTHAGORAS

'Here in Croton there lived a man* who was born on Samos.
He'd fled from the island because he detested the tyrants* who ruled there,
and gone into voluntary exile. His mind came close to the gods,*
remote as they are in the heavens above; what nature debarred
to human vision he saw with the eyes of the spirit within him.
All that this insight, backed by untiring effort, discovered,
he wanted to share with others. His audiences listened in wondering
silence while he explained how the universe first began,*
discoursed at length upon causes, defined what Nature and God were,
showed how the snow was formed and what was the source of the lightning;
whether the winds or Jupiter thundered from clouds in collision;
the reason for earthquakes, the laws which govern the stars in their courses,
and all the secrets of nature. This sage was the first to condemn
the consumption of animal food and the first to express such a doctrine,
informed as it was but not given credit, in words such as these:
' "Mortals, do not defile your bodies with sinful eating.
You have the crops to sustain you, the fruit which forces the branches
to bend down under its weight, the grapes that swell on the vine,
scented herbs and vegetables that fire can soften;

milk's sweet flow cannot fail you, nor honey fragrant with thyme.
The earth supplies her riches and nourishing food in lavish
abundance; she offers you feasts that demand no slaughter or bloodshed.
Meat assuages the hunger of animals – not every species,
since horses, cattle and sheep all happily flourish on grass.
Only the beasts whose natural instincts are savage and untamed –
angry lions, Armenian tigers, or bears and wolves –
delight in the taste of blood. What a heinous crime is committed
when guts disappear inside a fellow-creature's intestines,
when greedy bodies grow fat on the flesh of the bodies they've eaten,
and one living thing depends for its life on the death of its neighbour!
Here is this wondrous wealth which the earth, the kindest of mothers,
produces; and yet you are happy to bite cruel wounds in your victims,
chomping them up with your teeth in the grisly style of a cyclops.
You have no way of relieving the hunger-pangs of your greedy,
uncivilized bellies except by destroying the life of another.
'"That famous age to which we have given the title of 'Golden'*
was blessed in the fruit of the trees and the plants produced by the earth.
Man never polluted his lips with blood. The birds could safely

fly on their way through the air; the hare never feared to cross over
a field; and the fish didn't rise to the bait to be caught on a hook.
In a world of peace no traps or snares were there to alarm.
But someone, whoever he was, must have envied the lions their food
and set a fatal example by filling his greedy stomach
with meat. He opened the gate to crime. The killing of beasts
might first explain the staining of iron with steaming blood,
and that would have been enough. We may kill any animal seeking
to kill ourselves, we admit, without any scruple of conscience.
But while we may kill it, we don't have to make it a course in a banquet.
'"The rot continued: the sow, it is commonly thought, was the first
to be picked as a victim for sacrifice. Why? Because she'd uprooted
the planted seeds with her snout and interfered with the harvest.
The goat who had nibbled away at a vine was led to the altar
of Bacchus, there to be offered up to the god he'd offended.
These two were punished for damage they'd caused. But how have the sheep
done wrong – those peaceful grazers, intended by nature to help us,
whose udders are filled with delicious milk, whose fleeces provide us
with soft warm clothes, and who serve us better by living than dying?
What have the oxen done, those totally guileless creatures,
those simple, innocuous beasts who were born to a life of labour?

How could a man have the heart to remove the yoke of the plough
from his faithful worker and almost at once to make him a victim,
wielding his axe on that toil-worn neck, whose strength had allowed him
to break and renew the soil each year that had yielded a harvest?
A man so ungrateful hardly deserves the crops he is reaping.
'"But not content with such wicked behaviour, men choose to involve
the gods themselves in their guilt. They reckon the powers of heaven
are filled with delight when a loyal, hard-working bullock is slaughtered.
A victim unblemished and perfectly formed (its beauty its downfall),
adorned with ribbons and gold on its horns, is set by the altar.
It listens to prayers which it can't understand and can feel the sprinkling,
between the horns of its forehead, of barley it helped to produce.
Its throat is cut and the blood runs on to the knife, whose reflection
the animal may already have seen in the lustral water.
The priests move quickly to snatch and inspect the lungs from the throbbing
breast of the victim, in order to scan the purpose divine.
And then, O race of mortals, so great is man's lust for prohibited
food – you dare to gorge on your victim's flesh. Now stop,
I implore you, and mark my words. When you cram your mouths with the members

of slaughtered oxen, remember you're eating your own
farm-workers!

'"Now, since a god is moving my lips, I shall duly obey
that god who inspires me. I'll vent the spirit of Delphi
within me,
unveil the heavens, unlock the decrees of the mind sublime.
I'll utter great mysteries, never explored by our fathers'
intelligence,
mysteries long concealed in the dark. My will is to traverse
the stars on high, to abandon this clogging abode on earth,
to ride the clouds and to stand on the shoulders of mighty
Atlas,
gaze down from afar on men who are helplessly straying at
random,
empty of reason, trembling and troubled by fear of their
ending,
and so to embolden their hearts by unrolling the scroll of
fate!
'"Oh why does the human race, paralysed by the terror
of chill death,
why does it fear the Styx and its darkness, the meaningless
names
that are bandied by poets, the bogeys of life in imaginary
worlds?*
Our bodies, you know, can suffer no further ills, whether
flames
on the funeral pyre or rotting time in the grave has
destroyed them.
Our souls, however, are free from death. They simply
depart
from their former homes and continue their lives in new
habitations.*
I myself, I recall, at the time of the Trojan War
was called Euphórbus, Pánthoüs' son, and I once was
wounded
close to the heart by the powerful spear of King Menelàüs.

Not long ago, in the temple of Juno at Argos, I noticed
a shield and knew that I once had borne it myself on my
left arm!
All is subject to change and nothing to death. The spirit
in each of us wanders from place to place; it enters
whatever
body it pleases, crossing over from beast to man,
and back again to a beast. It never perishes wholly.
As pliable wax is easily stamped with a new impression
and never remains as it was nor preserves one single
shape,
but still is the selfsame wax, so I say that our souls are
always
the same, though they move from home to home in
different bodies.
Therefore, hark to my voice! Let love and family duty
never be overpowered by the lusts of the belly. Beware
the impious slaughter which dispossesses the soul of a
kinsman,
and never be tempted to feed your blood with the
blood of another!

'"My vessel is launched on the boundless main and my
sails are spread
to the wind! In the whole of the world there is nothing
that stays unchanged.
All is in flux.* Any shape that is formed is constantly
shifting.
Time itself flows steadily by in perpetual motion.
Think of a river: no river can ever arrest its current,
nor can the fleeting hour. But as water is forced
downstream
by the water behind it and presses no less on the water
ahead,
so time is in constant flight and pursuit, continually new.
The present turns into the past and the future replaces
the present;

every moment that passes is new and eternally changing.
'"You see how the night that has measured its course
moves on to the day,
and the radiant beams of the sun then follow the blackness
of night.
The sky has a different colour when weary creatures are
sleeping
at dead of night and later when Lucifer brightly emerges
out of the sea on his pearl-white steed; then again when
Auróra,
the herald of dawn, emblazons the world for surrender to
Phoebus.
The sun's round shield when it's lifted up from below the
horizon
is red in the morning and red once more when it sinks to its
rest;
it is brilliant white at its zenith, for then the ether is purer
and earth's contagion is farthest removed. The moon is
constantly
changing in size and in shape. If waxing, she's always
smaller
today than she will be tomorrow and always larger when
waning.
'"Again, you can see that the year has four new forms in
succession.
Her phases copy the total course of our human lives.
In early springtime, the year is tender and milky,
resembling
the age of our childhood: the grass is fresh and swelling to
fullness
but wanting in firmness and strength; the farmer delights in
its promise.
Everything then is in bloom, and the nurturing fields are a
riot
of bright-coloured flowers, though the leaves on the trees
still lack any vigour.
When spring is over, a sturdier year moves on into summer

and now is a strong young man. No season or time of life
is more hardy or fertile, no age when the heat is burning
more fiercely.
Then follows the autumn, when youth's excitements and
passions are over,
ripe and mellow, the bridge which leads from youth to
old age,
when the climate is milder and streaks of grey appear
on the temples.
Finally, winter arrives, which totters along like an old
man,
shivering, bald as a coot, or white if he has any hair
left.
'"Our bodies also are constantly changing and never
at rest;
what we were once and we are today, we shall not be
tomorrow.
Time was, we were hidden away in the dark of our
mothers' wombs,
no more than seeds and the early hopes of a human
being.
Then nature conspired with a midwife's art in a firm
refusal
to let us be strangled inside our mothers' distended
bellies,
and thrust us out of the house to survive in the open
air.
So thus brought forth to the light, we helplessly lay in
our cradles;
but soon we were starting to move like animals,
crawling on all fours.
Little by little, with wobbly knees, we shakily rose
to our feet and supported our frames with some firm
prop to hold on to.
After that we are strong and swift; and we traverse the
span
of our active lives, till we've served the time in between
and can follow

the downward path of declining years like the setting sun,
when the strength of our earlier years is undermined and
demolished.
Milo the wrestler* weeps when he's old and examines the
arms
which once had the power of Hercules' limbs and were
bulging with muscles,
but now hang down by his sides, limp, flaccid and useless.
Helen weeps too when she looks in her mirror to see her old
woman's
wrinkles, and wonders how she came to be twice
abducted.*
Time, the universal devourer, and spiteful decay,
there is nothing you cannot destroy. You close your
envenomed jaws
and little by little consume all things in a lingering death!
'"This law of impermanence also applies to what we call
elements.*
Pay attention, and I shall explain the changes they pass
through.
The world eternal contains four bodies which generate
matter.
Two of them, earth and water, are heavy and gravitate
downwards;
the other two, air and fire, which is even purer, are
weightless
and tend to make their way up, if nothing is pressing them
down.
Although these elements occupy different positions in
space,
they form the source and the end of all matter. When
earth breaks up,
it is rarefied into water; the moisture is thinned still further
and changes to wind and to air; which in time, relieved of
its weight
and now as thin as can be, darts up to the fire in the ether.
The process is then unravelled, and all the elements change
back:

fire is thickened and crosses again into denser air,
air forms into water, and water's compressed into firm, hard earth.
'"Nothing retains its original form, but Nature, the goddess
of all renewal, keeps altering one shape into another.
Nothing at all in the world can perish, you have to believe me;
things merely vary and change their appearance. What we call birth
is merely becoming a different entity; what we call death
is ceasing to be the same. Though the parts may possibly shift
their position from here to there, the wholeness in nature is constant.

'"I, for one, would believe that nothing continues the same
for long. The Golden Age eventually changed to the Iron;
and places also have often been subject to transformation.
I've seen myself what was once the solidest stretch of earth
replaced by water and land formations supplanting the ocean.
Shells can be seen on the ground some distance away from a shore,
and ancient anchors have been discovered on mountain summits.
Plains have been turned into valleys by rushing torrents in full spate;
flooding can likewise flatten a mountain to level ground.
Marshes can dry into sand and arid deserts be watered
to form great pools. New springs can gush at the bidding of Nature,

while others will trickle to nothing. When earthquakes cause an upheaval,
rivers have gushed from the ground or else dried up and subsided.
So, when a chasm swallows the Lycus up, it emerges
again some distance away, reborn from a different mouth.
So also a river which starts in Arcadia glides on its way
underground, and appears once more as the grand Erasínus in Argos.
They say that the Mysus was so ashamed of its source and its earlier
banks that today it flows elsewhere as the river Caïcus.
In Sicily's hills Amenánus may now be rolling the sand
downstream; if its source runs dry, the bed will be parched and empty.
Once you could drink the water which flows in the river Anígrus,
but now it is foul, since the centaurs used it to wash the wounds
inflicted by club-bearing Hercules' arrows – unless the stories
of poets are worth no credence at all. We also know
that the water of Hýpanis' stream is fresh and drinkable close
to its source in the Scythian mountains, but then grows brackish and nasty.
'"Antíssa, Pharos and Tyre, that famous Phoenician city,
were once surrounded by waves, but none is an island today.
In the time of its early inhabitants Leucas was part of the mainland,
where now it is ringed by the sea. They also say that Messána
was joined to Italian soil, till the sea abolished the common
boundary and formed the strait which divides the isle from the mainland.
The Achaéan cities of Buris and Hélice are to be found,

if you look for them, under water. The sailors will still point out
the toppled buildings and walls beneath the floods that submerged them.
Close to Troézen, the kingdom of Pittheus, a lofty and treeless
bulge has appeared in the form of a mound, where once the plain
was completely level. The story's a frightening one to relate:
the winds had been trapped inside their underground cave and were trying
to breathe their furious violence out, but had struggled in vain
to find any outlet. There wasn't a crack in the whole of their prison
through which their blasts could have possibly travelled. Their puffing and blowing
caused the ceiling of earth to stretch and to swell, like a bladder
or goatskin when they are inflated. The ground stayed swollen, and hardened
in time to the shape of the hill which now towers over Methóne.
'"Though many more instances come to mind that I've found or have heard of,
I'll only mention a few. Even water both causes and also
is subject to change. The spring at the temple of horn-crowned Ammon
is cold at noon but agreeably warm at sunrise and sunset.
They say that at Jupiter's shrine in Dodóna the torches are kindled
by bringing them up to the spring when the moon has shrunk to its smallest.
The Cícones live by a river whose water petrifies entrails

when people have drunk it and turns whatever it touches to
marble.
Crathis and Sýbaris, two adjoining rivers in these parts,
cause one's hair to be tinted in colours of gold and amber.
And more astonishing still, there are waters with power to
change
not only our bodies but even our minds. You must have
heard
of Sálmacis' pool,* whose waves emasculate men who have
bathed there;
the Ethiopian lake, where anyone drinking the water
either goes mad or passes out in a stupefied coma.
Whoever relieves his thirst at the spring in Arcadian Clitor
becomes an abstainer, avoids all wine and enjoys pure
water.
That spring may possess a power which stops wine's
heating effect;
or perhaps, as the locals explain, when the prophet
Melámpus had used
his herbs with a spell to cure the frenzied daughters of
Proetus
of madness, he threw the dregs of his medicines into the
water,
and so the detestation of wine survived in the spring.
Lyncéstis' river produces a different effect on its drinkers;
even a moderate sip will cause them to stagger around
as if they'd imbibed neat wine. There's also a place in
Arcadia,
known as Phéneos once, where the water is dangerously
suspect:
drink it during the day, but never at night when it's
harmful.
Such are the new and various powers which rivers and
lakes
can acquire. Long ages ago Ortýgia* floated in sea,
but today she sits firm. The Argonauts feared the
Symplégades, clashing

rocks that were splashed by the spray from the waves in the shock of collision;
the same rocks now stand still and the winds are powerless to shift them.
'"Take the sulphurous furnaces raging in Etna's volcano;
the fire won't always be active and was not so in the past.
Volcanoes' possible explanations support this statement.
One is that the earth is an animate creature with breathing-holes
through which she discharges flame in a number of different places;
this means that, whenever she quakes, she is able to alter her breathing
channels and open new craters while rendering others inactive.
Another theory: craters confine light winds in their depths;
suppose that these winds toss rocks against rocks, material holding
the seeds of flame, and it's that which generates fire by friction;
the craters will then grow cold as soon as the winds have abated.
Or else the fire may be caused by bitumen quickly igniting
or yellow sulphur which burns in wispy spirals of smoke;
but, of course, when the earth no longer supplies any food or richness
to nourish the flames (as time has exhausted all her resources),
and when devouring nature is thus deprived of the fuel it needs, unable to bear starvation, she'll starve her volcanoes.

'"The story goes that the men in hyperboréan Palléne
frequently grow light feathers which cover the whole of their bodies,
after they've bathed nine times in the waters of Lake Tritónis.
I cannot believe it myself, but the Scythian witches are also
reported to put on feathers by sprinkling themselves with their poisons.
'"But if one can speak of 'believing' facts that are fully established,
you see that bodies which time or heat has rotted to liquid
are turned into tiny animals. Dig me a ditch and then bury
a sacrificed bull. Experience shows that bees will be born
all over the mouldering carcass.* The bees will follow the parents
they sprung from in busily cropping the flowers in the fields they inhabit,
never shirking their task, as they always have plenty to work for.
A war-horse buried in soil will become the source of a hornet;
or if you remove the branching claws of a crab on the seashore
and bury the rest in the earth, a scorpion will shortly emerge
from the part you have carefully covered, and threaten your feet with its hooked tail.
Farmers have often observed the larvae weaving the threads
of their white cocoons on the leaves of the trees and finally changing
into the form of a butterfly, such as we see on a tombstone.*
'"Mud has seeds which produce green frogs; they are legless to start with,

but soon they acquire the limbs which allow them to swim and to take great
leaps with hind-legs longer than those they're endowed with in front.
When a bear reproduces, she doesn't give birth to a full-formed cub
but a half-living lump of flesh, which she carefully licks into shape
and eventually moulds to the kind of form she exhibits herself.
You see how the larvae, created by bees who make honey inside
the hexagonal cells of the comb, are memberless bodies at birth
and only later assume the feet and the wings for their business.
The bird of Juno, the peacock who carries the stars in her tail,
the eagle that bears Jove's bolts and the doves of beautiful Venus,
the whole of the avian family – who would suppose they could grow
from the yolk of an egg, if one didn't know for a fact that they did?
When a human backbone has decomposed in a well-sealed tomb,
some think that the spinal marrow is then transformed to a snake.
'"All these creatures can trace their beginnings to alien forms.
There's one, however, which seeds and produces itself – the bird
the Assyrians call the phoenix.* He doesn't depend on the grass
or the grain, but lives on teardrops of incense and juice of amomum.*
Once his allotted span, five hundred years, is completed,

he promptly uses his talons and unsoiled beak to construct
a nest in the branches high at the top of a quivering palm-tree.
As soon as this nest has been lined with spikes of the mildest nard,
with grated cinnamon, red-gold myrrh and cassia bark,
he rests his body upon them and ends his life in their fragrance.
And so, they say, from out of his father's body, a baby
phoenix is born, which is due to live for the next five centuries.
When time has given him strength and he's able to carry a load,
removing the weight of the nest from the heights of the palm-tree's branches,
he faithfully carries his cradle, the grave of his father before him,
into the breezes; and when he arrives at the sun god's city,*
he lays it in front of the sacred doors of Hypérion's temple.
'"But if these curious facts and stories inspire us with wonder,
we may be surprised by the change of sex, when the female hyena
who once was served by a male appears to have grown male organs.
Chameleons too, which obtain their food from the winds and the air,
at once take on the colour of anything else they are touching.
Vanquished India gave to Bacchus, the god of the grapevine,
all of her lynxes, whose urine, they say, is converted to pebbles
and hardens in contact with air. The same with coral,* a soft plant

under the water, which hardens at once when exposed to the air.

'"The day will come to an end and Phoebus will plunge his panting
steeds in the ocean deep before I complete my recital
of change to new forms. We see times change and civilizations
rise and fall. Yes, Troy was great in her riches and people;
for ten long years she was able to spend the blood of so many
sons in her cause; but now she is humbled and all she can show
for her glorious wealth is ancestral barrows and ancient ruins.
Sparta was highly renowned and so was powerful Mycénae;
so flourished the cities of Cecrops at Athens and Theban Amphíon.
Sparta is bare, flat earth and the towers of Mycenae were toppled;
nothing remains of Oedipus' Thebes or Pandíon's Athens,
except for their names. And now word goes that Dardánian Rome
is rising; close to the river that's born in the Ápennines, Tiber,
foundations are being laid of a mighty city and empire.
Rome is changing her shape as she grows. Some time in the future
she'll form the head of the boundless world. So prophets, they tell us,
and soothsaying oracles loudly proclaim. When Troy was collapsing,
Hélenus,* son of Priam, declared to the weeping Aenéas –

as far as I can recall – when the hero despaired of his safety:
'Son of a goddess, you know my mind has the power of
clairvoyance.
Troy shall not fall entirely, if you are alive and in safety.
Fire and sword shall give way before you. You'll go on
your mission,
bearing with you the gods that you've snatched from the
flames, until
you come to a strange new land which is kinder to you and
to Troy
than the country you left. I can see a city of Phrygian
grandsons,
greater than any that is or has been or shall rise hereafter.
Other leaders, over the centuries, will render her powerful;
but one man born of Iúlus' blood will make her the
mistress
of all the world. When the earth has enjoyed his presence,
the realms
of the sky will enjoy him too; he is finally destined for
heaven.'*
So I remember that Helenus said to the pious Aeneas
bearing his household gods. I rejoice that the walls of my
kinsmen*
are rising so fast, that the Greeks won a war for the good of
the Trojans.

'"But not to stray too far from the track (have my horses
forgotten
to run to their goal?): the sky and all that exists beneath it
can change its form, and so can the earth with all it
contains.
We too are part of the world and are more than physical
bodies;
we also possess winged souls. We are able to make our
abodes
inside wild beasts and to hide away in the hearts of the
cattle.

The creatures we see may well embody the souls of our parents
or brothers or people to whom we've been bonded – of human beings
at least. So let us allow them their safety and proper respect,
and refrain from gorging on feasts of our own flesh and blood, like Thyéstes.*
How evil a habit is formed, what an impious shedding of human
blood is contrived, when the throat of a calf is slit with a knife,
and the ears of the butcher are deaf to its mother's pitiful lowing!
How could anyone slaughter a goat as it cries in distress
like a baby, or eat a bird that he's fed with his own hand? Downright
murder I'd venture to call it! And where does it all lead on to?
The ox should remain at his plough and blame old age for his death.
Let the sheep provide our defence against the blasts of the north wind.
Goats should continue to offer their swollen udders for milking.
All of these nets and traps and snares and crafty devices –
have done with them! Cease to deceive the birds with your treacherous limed twigs,
duping the deer by stringing feathers on ropes to unnerve them,
luring the fish with bait on the hidden hooks of your lines.
If an animal harms you, destroy it; but do no more than destroy it.
Cleave to a diet that sheds no blood and is kind to all creatures."'

EGERIA AND HIPPOLYTUS

Such, and much else besides, was the learning they say that Numa
imbibed before he returned to his native land and accepted
the invitation to guide and govern the Latian people.
Blessed with a nymph for his wife and the Muses to show him the way,
he instructed the Romans in priestly rites and converted a nation
practised in brutal war to follow the arts of peace.
When old King Numa had ended his life, the senate and people
and women of Látium bemoaned his death. His wife Egéria
left the city to hide in the woods of the Áricine valley,
and there with her wailing dirges disturbed the worship of Tauric
Diana.* The nymphs of the forest and neighbouring lake repeatedly
warned her to stop and tried to console her with words of comfort.
Often Theseus' heroic son would discover her weeping
and say: 'Put an end to your tears. You aren't alone in your sad
misfortune. Consider the trials of others, and then you will find
your own more easy to bear. Let me tell you a story to lighten
your grief. I wish it were not my own, but it may prove helpful.
'You must have heard of Hippólytus,* sent to his death by a wicked
stepmother's cruel deceit and his father Theseus' credulity.
What I am going to say will surprise you and cannot be proved;
but I am Hippolytus. Once Pasíphaë's daughter, Phaedra,

failed to make me betray my father by sharing her bed,
and then denounced me for wanting what she herself had been guilty
of wanting. Perhaps she feared I would give her away, or was angry
because I rejected her love. At any rate, I was convicted;
although I had done no wrong, my father expelled me from Athens
and laid a deadly curse on my head as I went into exile.
'My chariot and horses were making for Pittheus' city of Troezen,
and soon I was driving along the coast of the isthmus of Corinth,
when half of the sea rose up. A gargantuan tidal wave,
as tall as a mountain, appeared to swell in a monstrous crescent,
bellowing loudly, and then to divide at its highest point.
At once, as the waves burst open, a bull* sprang out of the ocean,
a bull with menacing horns, breast-high in the yielding air,
spouting masses of sea from his gaping mouth and his nostrils.
My friends were terrified; I was absorbed in the prospect of exile
and stayed unafraid – when my horses suddenly bolted and wheeled
across the shore to the sea, long ears pricked up in their panic.
Wild with fear of the bull, they were going to hurtle my chariot
on to the towering rocks. I vainly struggled to manage
the foam-flecked bridles; I leant right back on my heels and pulled

on the supple reins as hard as I could. The furious horses
would still have been under control, if one of the wheels, at the very
point where it turned on the axle, had not crashed into a tree-stump.
Crack, and the wheel was broken to pieces! My body was flung
from the chariot, twined in the reins; and you might have observed my living
flesh being trailed on the ground, my sinews caught on the tree-stump,
some of my limbs being dragged along, with others obstructed
and left behind, as my bones were noisily snapped and splintered.
My weary spirit at last gave out, and there wasn't a part
of my body which could have been known as mine. It was all one wound.
'Now can you, Egeria, dare you compare your misfortune with mine?
I then had to visit the kingdom of darkness, to bathe my mangled
body in Phlégethon's waters. Only the healing gifts
of Apollo's son allowed me the chance to return from Hades.
Aesculápius'* powerful herbs and his medical skill,
to Pluto's annoyance, restored me to life. Diana was frightened
my visible presence would add to the envy inspired by this privileged
treatment, and so she concealed me behind a blanket of cloud.
But then, to allow me to show my face without any danger
in public, she added some years to my age and altered my features.

She wondered for quite some time whether Crete or Delos would suit me
best for a home; in the end she decided on neither and settled me
here. She also told me to change my name, as it might
have served to remind me of horses,* and said: "Hippolytus now can be
Vírbius, twice a man!" Since then I have lived in this forest
as one of the minor gods and no one knows who I am,
as I'm under Diana's protection and count as one of her household.'
Egeria's sorrow, however, could not be relieved by stories
of others' misfortunes. She laid herself down at the foot of the mountains
and melted away into tears, till the goddess Diana was moved
by the widow's dutiful grief and thinned her limbs into water
for ever. Egeria now had been changed to a cooling spring.

TAGES, ROMULUS' SPEAR, CIPUS

The nymphs were impressed by this strange occurrence. Hippolytus also
was no less amazed than the Tuscan ploughman who sighted the fateful
lump of earth in his fields, first moving freely in air,
then losing the shape of a clod to assume the form of a man,
who finally opened his new-found lips to reveal the future:
the natives know him as Tages, the earthborn man and the first

to teach the Etruscans the skill of predicting events to
come.

Rómulus too was astonished, the time when he saw the
spear
he had cast one day and planted deep in the Palatine
suddenly
burst into leaf, no longer fixed on its point of iron
but grounded in new-grown roots. It had changed from a
spear to a tree,
whose pliant branches surprisingly offered some welcome
shade.

Cipus* was just as surprised, when he looked in the river
and actually
saw there were horns on his head. Supposing it must be
illusion,
he raised his fingers a number of times to his brow and
found
he could touch what he'd seen; so he ceased to put the
blame on his eyes.
At the time he was journeying home in triumph after a
victory;
he halted and, raising his arms and eyes to heaven, he
cried out:
'Gods, whatever this omen signifies, if it be good,
let it be for the good of my country and Romulus' people;
if adverse,
adverse for me alone.' So he made an altar of green turf,
worshipped its gods with burning incense and poured
libations,
then duly consulted the quivering entrails of sacrificed
victims,
to learn what they might portend. The Etruscan augurer
took
one look and observed the signs of a mighty crisis
impending,

though none too clearly at first; but after he'd lifted his sharp gaze
up from the guts of the sheep to the horns of Cipus, he shouted:
'Hail, O King!* It is you, great Cipus, you with your horns
whom fate determines shall rule this place and the fortress of Latium.
Only cut short delay. Make haste to pass through the open
gates! It is destiny's will. When once you have entered our city,
you'll be our king and wield the sceptre in safety for ever!'
Cipus at once stepped back and, grimly turning his eyes
away from the walls, he exclaimed: 'Oh drive such evil omens
away, you gods, far away! Much better that I should pass
my life in exile than reign as king* on the Capitol Hill!'
When he'd spoken these words, he immediately summoned the Senate and people.
First he concealed his horns in a wreath of triumphal laurel,
then mounted a platform of earth which his valiant soldiers had built him.
After he'd made the traditional prayers to the gods, he addressed
his audience thus: 'There is one man here who shall be your king,
unless you drive him out of the city. I'll not reveal
that person by name but by means of a sign: he has horns on his forehead.
The augur declares, if he enters Rome, he will make you his slaves.
He might, I can tell you, have forced his way through the open gates;

but I withstood him, though none is closer to me than
he is.
Roman citizens, bar that man from your city for ever;
or, if he deserves it, bind him fast in the heaviest chains,
or else put an end to your fear by the death of a deadly
tyrant!'
A murmur ran through the crowd, just like the boisterous
east wind
whistling in bush-topped pines, or the waves of the sea in
the distance.
Amid the confusion of babbling sounds, one cry rang over
the others. 'Who is he?' it asked. And everyone carefully
examined
his neighbours' foreheads to find the horns that the speaker
had mentioned.
Then Cipus addressed them again, 'Look, here is the man
you are seeking!'
He took the wreath from his brow, though the crowd
tried hard to prevent him;
and there were the two conspicuous horns surmounting his
temples.
The people lowered their eyes and groaned, till in puzzled
reluctance
they looked at the warrior's glorious head. But they
wouldn't permit him
to stay unhonoured for long and replaced the wreath on
his forehead.
Since Cipus was now forbidden to enter the walls of the
city,
the elders gave him a parcel of land as a mark of honour,
large as the space that a man could enclose with the blade
of his ploughshare,
driving his oxen throughout one day from sunrise to
sunset;
and horns which recalled his miraculous form were
engraved on the brazen
gateposts, there to preserve his memory down through the
ages.

AESCULAPIUS

Reveal to me now, O Muses,* you guardian spirits of poets
(you know the truth, and your memory cannot be dulled by time),
how Aesculapius, son of Corónis, was brought to the island
ringed by the Tiber to join the gods of Romulus' city.
A terrible plague* had once polluted the air of Latium;
the sufferers' bodies were pallid as ghosts and foully neglected.
Weary of funeral rites, the people decided that human
efforts were useless and medical arts could do nothing to help.
So they looked for heavenly aid and sent a mission to Delphi,
Apollo's oracular shrine which is set at the earth's very centre.
The envoys humbly implored the god for a health-giving answer,
to help them in trouble and end their mighty city's afflictions.
The temple floor and the laurel tree shook, and so did the quiver
worn by Apollo himself. The listeners quaked in terror
as out of the innermost shrine these words came forth from the cauldron:
'Romans, the aid which you seek from here had better be looked for
nearer to home. Now search for it nearer to home. Your need
is not for Apollo to lighten your woes, but the son of Apollo.
Go on your way with my blessing and summon my offspring to heal you.'

After the thoughtful senate received the oracle's answer,
they managed to trace the city where Phoebus' son had his precinct,
and sent a party by ship to the port which serves Epidaúrus.*
As soon as the curved ship's prow was beached on the shingle, the envoys
approached the council of Grecian elders and begged them to part
with the god, whose presence would cure the plague destroying the people
of Italy; that was the oracle's promise which must be fulfilled.
Opinion was badly divided: according to some of the elders,
help should not be refused; but many believed they'd be wiser
to keep the aid of the god to themselves and not to release him.
The matter was still in suspense as dusk excluded the daylight.
Darkness had fully enveloped the world in the shadow of earth,
when the god of healing appeared in a dream to one of the envoys,
standing in front of the Roman's bed in the form of the statue
we see in his temple, holding a countryman's staff in his left hand,
stroking his flowing beard with his right. Then quietly and calmly
he said: 'Fear not. I shall come to your aid and forsake my images.
Now take a careful look at this snake entwining my staff,
and fix it well in your memory, so that you know it is I
when you see it again. I shall change to its likeness but seem to be greater,

great as a god should appear when the form of his body
is changed.'
The divine voice faded, the god went away and so did the
Roman's
sleep, on whose heels there followed the kindly,
life-giving day.
Now that the dawn had banished the fiery stars from
the heavens,
the elders, still undecided, came to the elegant temple
of Aesculapius and prayed that the god might show by
a clear sign
whether he wished to be taken to Rome or remain
where he was.
They had barely ended their prayer when the god, in
the form of a snake
with a towering golden crest, announced his advent by
hissing.
His statue, the altar, the doors, the marble floor and
the golden
gables trembled. Then raised breast-high in the heart of
the temple,
he stood there, gazing round on the crowd with his
fire-flashing eyes.
The people were stricken with fear, but the priest,
whose locks were bound
in the woollen headband of holiness, knew the
divinity's presence.
'The god is amongst us!' he cried. 'All hearts and
tongues be auspicious,
ye that are here! Most glorious deity, grant that this
vision
of thee be a blessing. Assist the peoples before thine
altar!'
All who were present worshipped the god as the priest
commanded,
repeating the words of his prayers as he spoke them.
Devout as Aeneas,

the Roman visitors too showed reverent hearts and tongues.
The god made clear his assent by nodding his crest, and thrice
emitted a hiss from his darting tongue to confirm his approval;
then, gliding down the shimmering steps and turning his head,
he looked once more at the ancient altar he now was deserting
and bade farewell to the temple and home he had known so long.
From there the enormous serpent slithered along a carpet
of flowers spread over the ground, and went on his way through the city
down to the port, which was fortified by a curving embankment.
Here he halted and, turning round with a kindly expression,
appeared to dismiss the escort of worshippers thronging behind him.
Quickly he boarded and lay in the Roman ship, which felt
the weight of the god and settled deeper into the water.
The Romans joyfully offered a slaughtered bull on the shore,
set garlands of flowers on the prow and unfastened the mooring cables.

The ship was wafted along by a gentle wind. The snake-god
lifted his body aloft and rested his neck on the curved prow,
gazing down on the blue below. On the mildest of breezes
he crossed the Ionian Sea and, five dawns on, he arrived
off Italy. There his voyage continued* past Lacinium,
famed for its splendid temple of Juno, and past Scylacéum.
He put Iapýgia behind him, avoiding Amphrýsia's rocks
to the left and Celénnia's crags on the right. Then skirting Rométhium,

Caulon and Locri, he braved the narrow straits of Pelórus'
headland in Sicily. Next he made for Aéolus' islands,
Témese's mines, Leucósia's isle and the gardens of sunny
Paestum, where roses abound. Thence, passing the Cape of Minerva and Cápri,
Surréntum's hills with their noble vineyards, he came to Stábiae,
Herculáneum, Parthenopéan Naples, perfect
for lazy living, on to the shrine of the Sibyl at Cumae.
Next to the medicinal springs* of the region, Litérnum's forest
of mastic trees, the river Voltúrnus with all the sand
swirling along on its bed, and the haunt of the doves, Sinuéssa.
On from there to unhealthy, swamp-infested Mintúrnae,
to Fórmiae, once Antíphates'* awful domain, Caiéta
where pious Aeneas buried his old nurse, Trachas, surrounded
by marshes, Circe's country and Ántium's beach with its firm sand.
Here the crew directed the sailing ship to the shore
as the sea had turned rough. On landing the god unfolded his coils
and, gliding along in voluminous folds with his sinuous spiral,
he came to his father Apollo's temple adjoining the sands.
When the spirit most close to himself had given him shelter until
the sea had calmed down, the serpent left the altar of Phoebus
and furrowed the sand to the ship with the track of his rustling scales.
He mounted the rudder and rested his head once more on the prow.

Shortly he passed by Castrum, Ínuüs' camp, sailed on
to Lavínium's sacred town and entered the mouth of the
Tiber.
Here on the banks he could see a crowd of commoners,
matrons,
elders, the virgins who watch the fires in the temple of
Vesta,
rushing to meet him and greet his arrival with cheers of
rejoicing.
The ship moved swiftly upstream. On a row of improvised
altars
incense was smoking and crackling, perfuming the air on
the two banks;
knives were dripping with blood, still warm, from sacrificed
victims.
And now he had entered the city of Rome, the world's
great capital.
Raising his serpent's body aloft and supporting his neck
on the top of the mast, the god looked round for a home
that would suit him.
He'd come to a point where the Tiber divides and its waters
encircle
a plot which is known as the Island; the river extends its
arms
in an equal embrace to either side of the land it's
surrounding.
Here the serpent-son of Apollo abandoned the Latian
pine ship and landed. Resuming his heavenly form, he
brought
the plague to an end and answered the prayers of the city
for healing.

THE APOTHEOSIS OF JULIUS CAESAR

Aesculapius came from abroad to dwell in our shrines,
but Caesar is god in his native city. He showed his genius
in war and in peace; but all his campaigns that ended in triumphs,
all his achievements at home and his rapid promotion to glory
did less to secure his change to a constellation or comet
than what was decreed by his son. Of the deeds of Julius Caesar
none can be greater than standing father to Caesar Augustus.
Julius surely could boast that he conquered the islander Britons;
he led a victorious fleet up the Nile with its seven-mouthed delta
and banks so rich in papyrus; he brought the Numídian rebels,
Cinýphian Juba, the realm of Pontus, which swells with pride
in the name Mithridátes, beneath the sway of the Roman people;
he rode in triumphs and merited more. But how can the glory
of all these exploits amount to the glory of having begotten*
so glorious a son – a leader, with whom at the head of our empire,
the gods have showered the richest of blessings on all mankind?
Yet Julius' son could not have been born from seed that was mortal,
so Julius had to be made a god. When Aeneas' golden
mother perceived this and also saw that a tragic death

awaited her priest* at the hands of traitors sworn to his murder,
her cheeks grew pale and she said to each of the gods she encountered,
'Look at the massive power of the treachery marshalled against me,
look at the dangerous plot which threatens a life that I dearly
cherish, the only surviving descendant of Trojan Iúlus.
Must I be the only god to be wracked by justified anguish?
One day I receive a wound from the spear of the Greek Diomédes;*
next I grieve for the walls of Troy so poorly defended;
then I must watch my son through endless wanderings – hounded,
tossed on the ocean, forced to enter the ghostly kingdom,
fighting his wars with Turnus, or rather with Juno's hate,
if the truth be told. But why recite the trials of my family
long in the past? My present alarm excludes remembrance
of earlier fears. Look there! You can see them, sharpening their daggers,
the traitors! Stop them, I beg you. Avert this iniquity. Vesta's
fires must never be quenched by the brutal death of her high priest!'
Such were the anxious complaints that Venus unsuccessfully
aired all over Olympus. The gods were certainly moved;
although they couldn't defy the iron decrees of the Fates,
they still were able to give clear signs* of looming disaster.
Men say that the crime was foreshadowed by clashing arms in the black clouds;
trumpets and horns were awesomely blaring and braying in heaven.
The sun's face also was gloomy and steeped the uneasy earth
in a ghostly pallor, shooting stars were constantly streaking

across the sky, and drops of blood were discharged from the rainclouds.
The face of the morning star was dimmed and bespeckled with dirty
rust-coloured spots; blood spattered the chariot bearing the moon.
All over the city the Stygian owl was hooting its sinister
omens, ivory statues wept, and voices chanting
dirges of doom could be heard, they say, in the sacred groves.
Every sacrificed victim presented signs of bad omen;
the lobe of a liver had been cut off by the priest, to be found
in the entrails and so give token of mighty upheavals impending.
Out in the forum, around men's houses and close to the temples,
the night was disturbed by the howling of dogs; the streets were haunted
by roaming ghosts of the dead; and the city was shaken by tremors.
But warnings from heaven were powerless to halt the plot or forestall
what fate had decreed. The conspirators entered the hall of the Senate,*
naked swords in their hands. No other building in Rome
but that sacred place would serve for their crime, for the infamous murder.
That was the moment when Venus beat her breast with both
of her hands and attempted to hide Aeneas' descendant in cloud,
as once she had stolen Paris away from his foe Menelaüs
and helped Aeneas himself to escape Diomedes' sword.

Then Jupiter said to her: 'Daughter, must you be the only goddess
to fight invincible fate? You may go yourself to the hall
of the Sisters Three, and there you will visit the Records of Fortune,*
a massive structure of tablets inscribed in brass and the solidest
iron. These tablets fear no clashing of clouds, nor the thunderbolt's
wrath, nor destruction, however it come; they are safe and abiding.
There you will find your family's destinies cast in enduring
adamant. I myself have perused and noted their contents.
Pay heed to the truth; you must not be left in the dark any longer.
'The man for whom you are labouring, Venus, has come to the end
of his time; the years he has owed to the earth are duly completed.
Now he will rise to the sky as a god and be worshipped in temples.
You will ensure it – you with the son who is heir to his name
and will shoulder the lonely burden of state. With us for his allies
in war, this bravest of men shall avenge the death of his father.
He shall be lord of the day when beleaguered Mútina's* captured
and sues for peace. His might shall be felt on Phársalus' plain,
when it's drenched with blood for a second time on the field of Philíppi.*
Sextus Pompeíus* shall suffer defeat in Sicilian waters.
A Roman general's Egyptian mistress,* who trusted the marriage

torch to her cost, shall fall; and her threat will be given the lie,
that Rome's strong Capitol Hill should bow to her isle of Canópus.
But why should I list barbarian lands and the nations that lie
to the east and the west? Where men can live and be fed by the soil,
that land shall be his. The sea shall follow and know him as master.
'When peace has come to the earth, he will turn his mind to the duties
and rights of his people at home. Most just as a giver of laws,
he will guide men's ways by his own example. His eye for the future,
for all his descendants to come, will lead him to order the holy
Livia's son* to adopt his name with the cares of his office.
Only when he has come to Pýlian Nestor's years
shall he rise to our home in the heavens and join the star of his kinsman.
Meanwhile you must rescue his father's soul from his cut-ridden body
and make him a comet,* that deified Julius' image may always
gaze on my Capitol Hill from the height of his shrine in the Forum.'*
Scarcely had Jupiter ended his speech, when life-giving Venus
set herself down in the heart of the Senate, though no one could see her,
and caught the soul of her Caesar up as it passed from his body.
She did not allow its component atoms* to be dispersed

into air, but carried it straight as it was to the stars in the heavens.
During her journey, she felt it glowing and catching fire,
so she let it escape from out of her bosom and fly right upwards.
Higher far than the moon it soared, displaying a sweeping
trail of flame in its wake, till it finally took the form
of a gleaming star. Now Julius watches his son's achievements
and proudly admits they surpass his own. Though Augustus will never
let it be said that his deeds are greater than those of his father,
speech that is free and unfettered, in spite of the emperor's wishes,
declares him supreme, and ventures only in this to oppose him.
Átreus gives way to his son Agamémnon's title to glory,
Aégeus to Theseus' greatness and Péleus to godlike Achílles.
Lastly, to take an example which matches the case of our Caesars,
Saturn is likewise lower than Jupiter. Jupiter governs
the heavenly heights and all the realms of the three-formed universe;
earth is under Augustus; and each is ruler and father.*
I call on you, gods who attended Aeneas through fire and sword
and compelled them to yield; you native Italian gods and Quirínus
who founded our city; on Mars who fathered unconquered Quirinus;
Vesta whom Caesar reveres amongst the gods of his household;
Apollo, an honoured neighbour of Caesar* as surely as Vesta;

Jupiter, throned in his temple surmounting the heights of Tarpeía;*
and all of the other gods whom a righteous poet may worship –
slow to dawn be that day, long after my time, when Augustus
leaves the world that he rules and rises up to the heavens.
So may he lend a favouring ear to our prayers from his new home.

EPILOGUE

Now I have finished my work, which nothing can ever destroy –
not Jupiter's wrath,* nor fire or sword, nor devouring time.
That day which has power over nothing except this body of mine
may come when it will and end the uncertain span of my life.
But the finer part of myself shall sweep me into eternity,
higher than all the stars. My name shall be never forgotten.
Wherever the might of Rome extends in the lands she has conquered,
the people shall read and recite my words. Throughout all ages,
if poets have vision to prophesy truth, I shall live in my fame.

Notes

References are to lines of the translation, which follows the numbering of the original as closely as possible. In cases where five lines of Latin are represented by six of English, the referencing follows the pattern 1, 2, 3a, 3b, 4, 5 or 6, 7, 8a, 8b, 9, 10; if by only four, it excludes lines ending in 3 or 8. A cross-reference to a line or lines in the *same* book omits the number of the book. Glosses on personal names are usually from Greek.

BOOK 1

Prologue: This sub-heading and all the succeeding story-titles in the translation have been introduced to help the reader. They do not appear in Ovid's original.

3 *transformed my art*: The translation is based on a widely accepted emendation to the received text. At the end of line 2, Ovid is probably alluding to the (for him revolutionary) change in his verse from self-contained elegiac couplets to the flowing hexameters associated with epic in both Greek and Latin. Ovid's poetry has itself undergone a metamorphosis, which he attributes to the gods whose inspiration he is praying for. See Introduction, pp. xxiii–xxiv.

21 *The god who is nature*: Ovid here reflects the Stoic view that God and nature are synonymous. A nameless creator is also implied in 32, 47, 78.

24 *the elements*: The theory of the four elements – earth, air, fire and water – is ascribed to Empedocles of Agrigentum (*c.* 493–*c.* 433 BC).

48 *five separate zones*: This notion, like that of the world as a sphere (35), is associated with the followers of Pythagoras (late fifth century BC).

56 *lightning that burns ... flashes*: Forked lightning and sheet

lightning, both thought to be caused by the collision of clouds in the wind.

62 *the mountains*: Perhaps the Himalayas or the Hindu Kush.

113 *Saturn*: The god was particularly associated with the Golden Age. He was deposed from the rule of Olympus by his son Jupiter and banished to the underworld.

149 *Justice the Maiden*: Justice had lingered among the countryfolk who had still clung to the virtues of the Golden Age. She occupied a place in heaven as the constellation Virgo.

152 *giants*: Said by the Greek poet Hesiod (*c.* 700 BC) to be the offspring of Earth and the blood of Uranus, Saturn's father. Their war with the Olympians, the Gigantomachy, was a frequent theme in Greek and Roman poetry and art.

164 *gruesome banquet*: The story of this 'banquet' is told in 226–30.

176 *Palatine Hill*: Where the grand imperial residences stood at Rome in the time of Augustus and after. Modern equivalents would be Whitehall in London or Capitol Hill in Washington. There is an element of contemporary satire in the whole 'gods' assembly' passage.

201 *murdering Caesar*: This possible reference in a simile to the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BC would have its counterpart in the actual event described in Book 15. It could also refer to one of several conspiracies against the reigning Caesar, Augustus.

205 *Augustus*: A flattering reference, elaborated in Book 15, to the Roman emperor who was eventually to banish Ovid.

232 *household gods*: In a surprising anachronism Ovid here introduces the *penates* who feature so prominently in Roman religion.

255 *ether*: The upper air, closest to the gods, with a fiery nature (26–8).

256 *a time would arrive*: Ovid anticipates the conflagration of the world caused by Phaëthon in Book 2.

333 *murex*: The shellfish which yields the dye for 'Tyrian' purple.

369 *Cephisus*: The river flows twelve miles to the north of Delphi, where the oracle of Themis (later Apollo, see 322) was situated. Ovid was probably thinking of the Castalian spring on Mount Parnassus, which was closely associated with the oracle.

390 *Epimetheus*: 'Afterthought', the brother of Prometheus, 'Forethought', who had created man out of clay (82–8).

430–33 *When heat and moisture are blended . . . enmity*: This theory, with the view that the world is a warring concourse of opposites, goes back to the Greek philosopher Anaximander (sixth century BC). It recurs in Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 5. 797–8.

447 *Pythian Games*: An ancient Greek festival, second only to the Olympics, held at Delphi every four years after 582 BC and involving competitions in music and athletics.

562–3 *Augustus' gates . . . oak-leaves*: Two laurels grew outside the entrance to the emperor's palace on the Palatine. The door was surmounted by an oak-wreath, awarded for saving the life of a comrade in battle and voted to Augustus as saviour of the Roman people – another flattering reference.

583 *Inachus*: Here Ovid shifts the geographical focus from Thessaly to Argos (601), through which the river Inachus flows.

648 *Two letters*: IO for Io's name, but also one of the Greek exclamations of grief, taken up in Inachus' 'Woe and alas!'.

747 *a goddess*: Io was identified with Isis, the great goddess of the Egyptians, who had a cult in Rome during Ovid's time; her son Epaphus (748) was identified with Apis, the bull-god of Memphis.

775 *your spirit impels you*: These words used of Phaëthon near the end of the book deliberately echo those that Ovid uses of himself at the very beginning in line 1. See Translator's Note, p. xxxviii.

BOOK 2

8 *sea-gods*: The learned members of Ovid's audiences would recognize the list as based on the procession of marine deities attending the abduction of Europa in the poem by the late Greek poet Moschus (second century BC). These lines near the start of the book thus link with the picture of Europa herself in the closing story (833–75).

23 *Phoebus*: Here identified with the sun-god known in Greek as Helios or Titan. In this capacity his character is very different from the Phoebus Apollo who is Daphne's amorous pursuer in Book 1 or Coronis' jealous lover later in Book 2.

78 *beasts*: The signs of the zodiac.

138–9 *Serpent . . . Altar*: Constellations, respectively high and low in the sky.

156 *Tethys*: The wife of Ocean, the sea encircling the earth (1.13–4) which the sun rises out of and sets into. She is pictured here as Ocean's doorkeeper. She is also the mother of Clymene, so Phaëthon is her grandson.

173 *barred to them*: The Great Bear never sinks below the horizon (in the northern hemisphere).

197 *two whole signs*: The Scorpion's claws also form Libra, the Balance.

245 *when it fought with Achilles*: As narrated in Homer, *Iliad* 21.328 ff.

255 *lies hidden*: The source of the Nile was a mystery in the ancient world.

258–9 *Padus . . . Tiber*: The first Italian names in the poem.

454 *heat of her brother*: Diana, the moon goddess, and Apollo, the sun god, were the twin children of Latona (6.185 ff.).

495 *her father Lycaön*: Lycaön was transformed into a wolf (1.232–9) before the Flood, which he and Callisto now appear to have survived. Ovid does not seem worried by such inconsistencies.

507 *neighbouring constellations*: Ursa Major and Ursa Minor.

517 *farthest point of the axis*: Juno's rhetoric appears to undermine itself by mentioning the *remoteness* of the Bears as well as their height which she finds so insulting.

527 *foster-parents*: Ocean and Tethys bore and reared many of the gods.

528 *debar those Bears*: See 173a. Another inconsistency. The Great Bear has already existed and been excluded from the waves at the time of Phaëthon's ride.

537–8 *watchful geese . . . Capitol*: A reference to the famous occasion about 390 BC when the Gauls made a night attack on Rome and the city was saved when the geese in Juno's temple gave the alarm.

553 *born of the soil*: Vulcan, when trying to rape Minerva, discharged his semen on her thigh. The goddess wiped it off on to the ground and so gave rise to Erichthonius, 'Earth-born'.

555 *two-formed Cecrops*: A mythical king of Athens with the body of a man and the tail of a snake.

564 *the owl*: Traditionally sacred to Minerva/Athena and portrayed on Athenian coins. Her story follows at 591–5.

570 *Coroneus*: Nothing to do with Apollo's love, Coronis. Ovid seems, rather confusingly, to have chosen this name as *korone* is Greek for 'crow'.

592 *corrupted her father*: Probably the crow's malicious invention. The tradition went that Nyctimene was forced into incest.

629 *his son*: Aesculapius, the god of medicine, who comes to Rome in 15.622–5. See also note on 648.

630 *Chiron the centaur*: Chiron, half man and half horse, educated many of the famous Greek heroes.

638 *Ocyrhoë*: 'Swift-flowing'.

648 *two changes*: Aesculapius was given divine powers of healing, but incurred Jupiter's displeasure by bringing Hippolytus back to life (15.534–5). He was therefore blasted by lightning and so a

'lifeless body' (647), until Apollo secured his deification and his cult as a god of healing was established.

652 *blood of the Hydra*: Chiron was accidentally shot by Hercules with an arrow tipped with the venom of the Hydra of Lerna, a snake with seven heads, which the hero had killed on the second of his famous labours.

654 *Sisters Three*: The Greek Moirai or Fates, who allotted each mortal his destiny at birth.

675 *Hippe*: 'Mare'.

688 *Battus*: 'Chatterer'.

707 *touchstone*: The stone used to test base metal pretending to be gold.

712 *temple of Pallas*: The Parthenon on the Acropolis. Ovid sets his story at the time of the Great Panathenaea, a festival held at Athens every three years.

728 *Balearic sling*: The inhabitants of the Balearic Islands were renowned for their use of the sling or catapult.

840 *your mother's star*: Maia was one of the seven Pleiades.

845 *Tyrian*: Ovid equates the old Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon (840).

873 *frightened prize*: The picture derives from Moschus' *Europa*. See note on 8.

BOOK 3

5 *iniquitous . . . devotion*: The ambivalent description of Agenor's behaviour is reflected at the end of the book (727–8) in the image of Agave's iniquity in displaying her son Pentheus' severed head as an act inspired by her devotion to Bacchus.

13 *Boeotia*: The name is derived from the Greek for 'cow.'

14 *Castalia's cave*: The recess or 'cave' from which the Delphic oracle spoke was often associated with the Castalian spring on Mount Parnassus some way away.

45 *Snake*: The constellation Draco.

53 *skin of a lion*: Ovid is here associating Cadmus with Hercules, who was commonly portrayed as wearing the weapon-proof skin of the Nemean Lion, killed on the first of his labours.

111 *tapestry frontcloth*: This engaging simile is drawn from the Roman stage, where a curtain with embroidered figures was drawn up from the floor at the end of a play to close off what lay behind.

126 *Echion*: 'Viper'. He married Cadmus' daughter Agave and was

the father of Pentheus, who features in the last story of this book.

142 *No crime . . . a pure mistake*: The language is identical with words eventually used by Ovid to describe the offence for which he was exiled to Tomis. Moreover, in *Tristia* 2.103 ff. the poet actually compares himself to Actaeon. It is therefore possible that 141–2 are a later addition; or Ovid may subsequently have been quoting from himself.

198 *Autonoë*: Another daughter of Cadmus who, like Agave, is one of the bacchanals in the Pentheus story.

207 *Blackfoot . . . Tracker*: Ovid uses made-up Greek names (here given English equivalents) for his catalogue of Actaeon's hounds, which many in his audience would have understood and enjoyed.

271 *to bear him a child*: In Greek mythology, Hera (Juno) is credited with the birth of Ares (Mars), Hephaestus (Vulcan), Hebe (goddess of youth) and Ilithyia (Lucina, goddess of childbirth).

310 *baby*: He will become the god known in Greek as Dionysus or Bacchus, among other names. His return to Thebes as a 'new god' is predicted at 520.

342 *Liriope*: 'Lily-like'. For reasons of euphony and metre, this proper name is stressed on the first and not the second syllable, in breach of the traditional pronunciation convention in English.

348 *he never knows himself*: Ovid is playing ironically with the famous Greek religious injunction, 'Know yourself', which was inscribed in the temple of Apollo at Delphi. The story which follows shows Narcissus coming to know himself in an unexpected way and dying in consequence.

463 *I know myself*: See note on 348.

513 *Pentheus*: Cadmus' grandson, now the young king of Thebes.

520 *Liber*: 'Free', originally the name of an Italian vegetation god, later identified with the Greek god Bacchus. The name reflects the liberating effect of the god of wine and ecstatic joy.

539 *to found a new Tyre*: A wild misrepresentation. Cadmus did *not* come, like the Trojan Aeneas to Rome, bearing his household gods; and the Theban elders owe their ancestry to the rump of the armed men sprung from the dragon's teeth (126–30, 531–2).

542 *thyrsus*: The bacchic 'wand', consisting of a staff topped with a bunch of ivy leaves.

559 *King Acrisius*: Normally a character in the Perseus story. His opposition to Bacchus only occurs in Ovid and is mentioned again in 4.607–14.

568 *as . . . I have seen*: The intrusion of the poet himself in the first person is very rare in epic and would have jarred, particularly in

an 'epic' simile – but Ovid seems to have enjoyed this kind of naughty incongruity.

664 *tangled with ivy*: The ivy, grape clusters (667) and animals mentioned (669) are all associated with Bacchus in his full manifestation.

675 *scaly*: A curious detail. Ovid seems to have ignored the fact that dolphins have no scales.

720 *Actaeon's ghost*: A poignant link with the Actaeon story, though Pentheus is much to blame where his cousin was not.

727 *Displaying it high*: See note on 5.

BOOK 4

11 *different titles*: Gods would be invoked by all their various names, guises, functions, etc., with a saving clause at the end (16) to guard against possible omissions.

13a *child of two mothers*: See 3.310–13.

13b *Thyone*: Another name for Semele; but the title Thyoneus is derived from the Greek for 'to rave'.

15 *Iacchus*: From one of the bacchanals' ecstatic cries, *iacche*.

19 *hornless epiphany*: Bacchus could appear as a horned bull, a snake or lion, as well as in the form of an androgynous human male.

23b *Lydian sailors*: The story was told in 3.597–686.

38 *Minerva*: Here in her role as the goddess who presides over women's indoor activities and so over the sisters' 'untoward housecraft' (33). Although she is over-ridden by Bacchus in the first part of this book, her authority is reasserted at the end.

43 *many tales*: Ovid, by a common rhetorical device, shows his learning by mentioning three mini-metamorphoses, only to reject them.

47 *Dercetis' daughter*: The queen Semiramis, who built the famous walls (58) of Babylon.

88 *Ninus' tomb*: Semiramis was the widow of Ninus, king of Nineveh, where his tomb, a well-known monument in antiquity, was probably sited, rather than in Babylon.

122 *a spurt from a waterpipe*: The simile takes us to the streets of Ovid's Rome and can only strike modern readers as bizarre. But Pyramus' blood has somehow to reach the fruit of the mulberry tree!

170 '*Loves of the Sun God*': Here again the Sun of the Phaëthon story. See 245–6.

172 *Mars and Venus*: This famous story first appears in Homer's *Odyssey* (8.266 ff.) and had previously been told by Ovid in his *Ars Amatoria* (2.561 ff.). Here he works it in to motivate the stories of Leucothoë and Clytië which follow.

204 *Rhodos*: The mother, by the Sun, of Phaëthon's sisters, the Heliades (2.340–66.).

209 *land of incense*: Here Persia rather than Arabia.

213 *Belus*: The name is a Greek form of the Old Testament 'Baal'.

270 *in its new form*: The heliotrope takes its name from the Greek words for 'sun' and 'turn'.

276 *No more of the loves*: Another list of stories mentioned only to be rejected. See note on 43.

282 *Curetes*: A Cretan tribe, said to have drowned the cries of the infant Zeus by dancing and clashing their weapons to prevent his father Cronos finding his son to devour him. Their birth from a rain-shower is presumably suggested by this association with the sky god.

291 *Hermaphroditus*: The name is derived from the Greek names for Mercury (Hermes) and Venus (Aphrodite).

320 *she spoke*: Salmacis' speech is a parody of the much more modest appeal made by the shipwrecked (and naked) Odysseus to Nausicaä, the princess of Phaeacia, in the *Odyssey* (6.149 ff.).

333 *cymbals are clashed*: Eclipses were considered ill-omened and loŭd noises were thought to avert their effects.

362 *like a huge snake*: In the traditional simile of the snake and the eagle, the former is usually the victim, but here it has the upper hand.

392 *Phrygian pipes*: Exotic instruments with curving bells.

395 *curtains of ivy*: The ivy and vines on the women's looms symbolize the triumph of Bacchus over Minerva.

415 *Latin name from the evening*: Bats in Latin are *vespertiliones*.

421 *nursed in his cradle*: See 3.313–15.

456 *House of the Damned*: The place in which the great sinners whose names follow received their famous punishments for crimes committed on earth. The giant *Tityos* (457) had tried to rape Latona, the mother of Apollo and Diana. *Tantalus* (458), according to one story, tested the gods' omniscience by feasting them on the flesh of his dismembered son Pelops. *Sisyphus* (460) was a notorious trickster who betrayed one of Jupiter's love-affairs. *Ixion* (461) had tried to rape Juno and was crucified on an eternally revolving wheel of fire. The offence of the fifty daughters of Danaus (462) is given by Ovid as well as their punishment.

466 *Aeolus*: Not (here) the god of the winds, but Hellen's son who became the first ruler of Thessaly.

474 *Tisiphone*: 'Avenger of murder', the senior Fury.

533 *granddaughter*: Venus was the mother of Harmonia, Cadmus' wife.

538 *my Greek name*: Aphrodite, from *aphros*, 'foam'.

568 *Illyrian frontier*: Cadmus and Harmonia seem to have travelled a long way north-west, as far as modern Albania.

575 *long-bellied serpent*: Cadmus' prayer recalls Minerva's prophecy in 3.98–9.

607 *Acrisius*: See 3.559–60. His opposition to Bacchus is not recorded elsewhere and must be an invention of Ovid's to provide a link between the Theban legend (which he has now largely finished with) and the story of Perseus.

611 *Danaë*: An oracle had said she would bear a son who would kill her father. Acrisius therefore put her in prison, where she was visited by Jupiter in the form of a shower of gold. The result was Perseus, who eventually killed his grandfather accidentally with a discus while competing in some funeral games.

615 *whirring wings*: The winged sandals given to Perseus by Mercury.

616 *snake-headed Gorgon*: Medusa, of whom we hear more later (779 ff.). Her glance turned all who looked on her to stone.

669 *Cepheus*: The boasts of his wife Cassiopeia had provoked the anger of the Nereïds and also of Neptune, who had afflicted the country with a great flood and a terrible sea-monster. The oracle of Jupiter Ammon had declared that deliverance could only be obtained if the princess Andromeda were chained to a rock as an offering to the monster.

753 *three of the gods*: Mercury and Minerva had helped Perseus to kill the Gorgon, and Jupiter was his father.

774 *daughters of Phorcys*: The two (or in some accounts three) Graiae (777) were sisters of Medusa and the other two Gorgons (779).

785 *Pegasus*: The famous winged horse. His brother Chrysaor was human.

799 *her aegis*: This must refer here to Minerva's shield, since she is covering her eyes with it. The term is also applied (as at 2.754) to her 'breastplate', a betasselled goatskin tabard, fringed with snakes and decorated centrally with the Gorgon's head.

802–3 *That explains why . . . on the front of her bosom*: In an authorial addition to Perseus' story, Ovid gives the origin of Minerva's common representation in her 'breastplate' aegis. The final image of the book is of the goddess, after her defeat by Bacchus earlier

in the poetic sequence (9–10, 394–8), asserting her authority at its most terrifying.

BOOK 5

11 *bride*: Andromeda had previously been betrothed to Phineus.

12 *counterfeit gold*: See note on 4.611.

47 *aegis*: This must be Minerva's shield. See note on 4.799. Minerva comes to help Perseus, as Athena supports Odysseus in his fight with the suitors (*Odyssey* 22).

155 *goddess of war*: Ovid calls her Bellona, but he is presumably thinking of Minerva, who is present (46–7, 250–51).

215 *sideways*: Phineus dares not look at Perseus face to face.

238 *by challenging Proetus*: A detail only found in Ovid. In other versions, Perseus accidentally kills his grandfather with a discus at this stage and fulfils the prophecy Acrisius sought to avert. See notes on 242 below and 4.611.

242 *Polydectes*: King of Seriphos (pronounced here with the first syllable stressed), who had rescued Danaë and the infant Perseus after they had been set adrift in a boat by Acrisius. He sent Perseus on the quest for the Gorgon's head, so that he could be free to seduce Danaë.

257 *winged horse*: Pegasus (4.785–6). The fountain was called Hippocrene, 'horse spring', and regarded as a source of poetic inspiration.

274 *Pyreneus*: A tyrannical king, not otherwise known of.

283 *humbler abodes*: This looks forward to the story of *Philemon and Baucis* (8.629–724).

288 *taking wing*: Ovid finds it convenient here to give the Muses wings, which they do not normally possess.

319 *war in the sky*: A new account of the Gigantomachy (1.151–62), blasphemously attributing defeat to the gods.

327 *became a ram*: In several cases, the Pierid singer is equating the Olympians with the animal manifestations of their Egyptian counterparts.

338 *Calliope*: 'Beautiful-voiced', often regarded as the Muse of epic poetry.

347 *Typhon*: Now represented not as a victor (323) but a prisoner inside the earth from which he sprang.

359 *monarch of Hades*: In Greek Hades was originally the name of the god of the dead, later of the whole underworld (as here). The Roman name for its king was Pluto or Dis.

368 *world's three kingdoms*: When the universe was divided up between the three sons of Saturn, Jupiter drew the first lot (the sky), Neptune the second (the sea) and Pluto the last (the underworld).

379 *her uncle's wife*: Proserpina is the daughter of Jupiter and so Neptune's niece.

406 *Bacchiadae*: The founders of Corinth. The Corinthian Archias had founded a Greek colony at Syracuse.

499 *in a timelier hour*: The story of Alpheüs' pursuit of Arethusa is told at 572–642.

528b *different kingdoms*: See note on 368.

541 *Acheron*: 'Wailing', a river in Hades, here personified.

543 *Erebus*: 'Gloom', another river in Hades.

544 *Phlegethon*: 'Fiery', one more underworld river.

552 *Sirens*: Half women, half birds, best known from Homer's *Odyssey* 12.39 ff., 166 ff. Their metamorphosis is very artificially woven in here.

567 *six months*: The Proserpina story is the famous myth which accounts for the seasons.

585 *Stymphalus*: About forty miles away from the Alpheüs.

607–8 *Orchomenus . . . Elis*: Arethusa's wild and exhausting journey makes rough geographical sense, though Ovid must also be playing with the sound of the names.

640 *Ortygia*: 'Quail-island', where the so-called Fountain of Arethusa at Syracuse can still be seen today. Diana was called the Ortygian goddess as Ortygia was an early name for Delos, where she was born.

646 *Triptolemus*: The cult-hero and mythical inventor of agriculture, who established the worship of Ceres (Demeter) and the famous Mysteries of Eleusis near Athens.

678 *raucous, chattering birds*: The book ends, as it began (2–7), in aggressive noise.

BOOK 6

5 *Lydian*: The scene has now shifted from mainland Greece to Lydia in central Ionia (Asia Minor).

6 *Arachne*: 'Spider'.

9–10 *Phocaean / purple*: The purple dye came from a shellfish found off the Ionian coast at a town called Phocaea.

26 *as a hag*: We may be reminded of Juno visiting Semele in a similar disguise (3.273–86).

70 *rock of Mars*: The Areopagus to the west of the Acropolis at Athens. The contest between Minerva/Athena and Neptune/Poseidon, as to which of the two gods should own the land and determine its name, traditionally took place on the Acropolis itself.

87 *Haemus and Rhodope*: A young couple so passionately in love that they called each other Jupiter and Juno and were transformed into mountain ranges for their presumption.

90 *queen of the Pygmies*: A woman who had been turned into a crane for challenging Juno's majesty and claiming the worship of her people. The result was a permanent state of war between cranes and Pygmies.

93 *Antigone*: Not the heroine of Sophocles' tragedy but a Trojan princess changed to a stork because she had rashly vied with Juno.

98 *Cinyras*: Otherwise unknown. Presumably his daughters had boasted of their beauty and been transformed to the stone which formed the temple steps of the deity they had offended.

103 *Arachne's picture*: The mortal woman's tapestry challenges Minerva's warnings and the gods generally by its depictions of twenty-one 'misdemeanours' (131) committed by five of the gods.

116 *daughter of Aeolus*: Canace.

161 *her two children*: Apollo and Diana (205).

174 *feast with the gods*: See note on 4.456. An ironical touch, as Tantalus had been punished for abusing his privilege.

190–91 *Delos, who said . . . shifting island*: The island of Delos is personified in its welcome to Latona. It was originally a floating island (see also 334), until it was fixed to the seabed as a reward for its kindness to the goddess.

213 *as her father's*: Ovid may be referring to one version of the Tantalus story which said he was punished for divulging the gods' secrets to men.

311 *mountain summit*: Mount Sipylus in Phrygia, where a certain crag with a stream dripping down its face was identified by the ancients with Niobe, because (from a distance) it resembled a weeping woman bowed with grief. It still does.

407 *dismembered the boy*: See note on 4.456.

410 *empty space*: The shoulder had been irretrievably consumed by Ceres in her distraction for the loss of Proserpina.

416 *wrath of Diana*: The story will be told in Book 8.

668–9 *nightingale . . . swallow*: In Greek literature Procne is changed

to the nightingale and Philomela to the swallow; but in the Roman poets it is usually the other way round. Ovid does not specify which sister becomes which bird and may thus be cleverly exploiting the mythological confusion. For the Greek tragedians, Procne, perpetually grieving for Itys, had been (like Niobe) a paradigm of mourning, but that is not so here.

680 *Procris*: The story of her and Cephalus is told in 7.694–862.

681 *Orithyia*: 'Mountain-raver'.

721 *first of all ships*: Traditionally so, but Tereus and others have crossed the sea earlier in this book (422–3, 445–6, 511–19).
Golden Fleece: The fleece at the end of the book echoes the fleece from which Arachne was spinning wool close to the beginning (20–21).

BOOK 7

7–8 *Golden Fleece*: Originally of a ram born to Theophane after she was raped by Neptune in a ram's form (6.118a). Jason had been sent by his evil uncle Pelias, king of Iolcus in Thessaly, to bring it back from Colchis to Greece – a dangerous task as the fleece was guarded by an unsleeping dragon.

11 *reason was powerless . . . passion*: Here follows the first of several long soliloquies in the poem, delivered by characters torn and wavering between conflicting forces.

62 *mountainous rocks*: The Symplegades, 'clashers', which like Scylla (64) and Charybdis (63) are dangers encountered at sea by Odysseus in Homer (who calls them the Wandering Rocks) and are all mentioned again in the *Metamorphoses*.

94–5 *threefold / goddess*: Hecate was the underworld counterpart of Diana on earth and the Moon in the sky.

96 *sun god*: The father of Aeëtes and so Medea's grandfather.

121 *teeth of the Theban dragon*: The dragon killed by Cadmus in Book 3. The teeth were divided by Athena between Cadmus and Aeëtes, who must have supplied them to Jason for this second dangerous task.

145–6 *exulted in silence . . . magical powers*: There is some corruption of the Latin text of these lines and the general sense is reproduced here.

182–3 *Her robes hung loosely . . . shoulders*: Medea's attire avoids all knots, which are resistant to magic.

207 *cymbals may clash*: See note on 4.333.

233 *transformation of Glaucus*: The story is told at 13.904–67.

295 *his nurses*: Obscure, as they cannot be Bacchus' nurses of 3.313–15. 294–6 seems to be a filler, to mark off the two contrasting Medea stories involving Aeson and Pelias.

298 *Pelias' house*: See note on 7–8.

324 *Ebro*: Close to the western ocean where the sun sank.

351 *flight through the air*: Medea's tour round the Aegean and back to the Greek mainland may be followed in a classical atlas (with the help of the Glossary Index) by those with the interest to do so. Her route seems to be dictated by Ovid's wish to work in about fifteen minor metamorphoses and a few other mythological references, which need hardly detain the reader any more than they detained Medea.

358 *petrified snake*: The story is told at 11.56–60.

372 *Cycnus*: Not Phaëthon's friend, also changed to a swan at 2.367–77.

393 *rain-fed mushroom*: The tradition is unique to this passage.

394 *Jason's new bride*: Here Ovid comes very briefly to the content of Euripides' tragedy *Medea*, in which Medea, in outraged pride, murders Jason's newly-wedded bride with a poisoned robe and then kills the two children she herself had borne Jason, to spite their treacherous father.

405 *heroic deeds*: Theseus, on his coastal journey from Troezen to Athens, disinfested the road of various robbers and beasts, as later recounted in the eulogy accorded him by the Athenian people at 433–50.

434 *dangerous Cretan bull*: Theseus killed a bull that was destroying crops and killing farmers in the plain of Marathon. It is not to be confused with the Minotaur, also killed by Theseus, but was identified with the Cretan bull which Hercules captured and brought to Argos on his seventh labour (see 9.186).

438 *Procrustes*: His visitors were lopped or stretched to fit his famous bed.

439 *Cercyon*: He challenged travellers to a wrestling bout and killed them when they lost.

442 *victim's fragments*: Sinis would tie the arms of someone he had captured to one pine-top and his legs to another before letting the trees go.

443 *Sciron*: Who robbed his victims and made them wash his feet, then kicked them on to the rocks below.

457 *Androgeos*: Minos' son, who (according to one account) had been murdered by his fellow-competitors after winning the Panathenaic games.

460 *scouring the sea*: Here Ovid takes the opportunity for a catalogue of the Aegean islands.

470 *Peparethos*: All the other islands mentioned in 469–70 are in the Cyclades group. In 471 Minos turns westward for Aegina; but Peparethos is about 90 miles almost due north of Aegina, and it was noted for its production of wine, not of olive oil. Might Ovid have been thinking of the metrically identical Prepesinthos, a smaller island in the Cyclades and (like the others) south-west of Aegina?

524 *her rival*: Aegina, a girl originally called Oenone (cf. Oenopia 472), whom Jupiter had abducted to the island and there fathered Aeacus on her. Hence Juno's hatred.

654 *Myrmidons after the ants*: The Greek for 'ant' is *myrmex*.

660 *east wind*: As Athens is north-north-east of Aegina, an *east* wind is hardly precise, but it fits metrically in Latin. By mentioning it twice, perhaps Ovid is making a joke of his navigational inaccuracy.

688–9 *the price / he had paid*: This is thought to refer to a detail in Ovid's sources for this story: Procris, to prove to Cephalus that he could be tempted into worse things than he was accusing her of, disguised herself as a boy and offered her husband the spear in return for a homosexual act. If this is right, Ovid is presumably giving his sophisticated audience notice early on that *his* treatment will be excluding (as it does) this particular incident.

690 *son of a goddess*: Phocus' mother was the Nereïd Psamathe, who returns later in the story of Peleus (11.379–406).

759 *riddle*: 'What walks on four legs in the morning, two at noon and three in the evening?' The Sphinx killed any who failed to solve her riddle by throwing them over a cliff. When Oedipus arrived and gave the correct answer ('Man'), the Sphinx threw herself over and he became king of Thebes. Ovid's audience would certainly know this story, as many do today.

864 *pair of his sons*: Peleus and Telamon (669). Ovid began the book by referring to 'Boreas' twins' (3), Zetes and Calaïs. Another couple of brothers balances them in the penultimate line.

BOOK 8

58–9 *the son / who was murdered*: See note on 7.457.

69 *If wishes were horses . . . beggars would ride*: Here, as in 72–3 and 79, Ovid introduces sententious clichés into Scylla's rhetoric.

How sympathetically is he treating this heroine in her internal conflict?

121 *swirling Charybdis*: The famous whirlpool off the coast of Sicily, usually associated (as in 7.63–5) with the monster Scylla – but a different Scylla from the subject of this episode and therefore not mentioned now. (Her story is told later on in Books 13 and 14.)

132 *adulterous queen*: Pasiphaë, who fell in love with a bull and achieved intercourse with it by placing herself inside a wooden cow contrived by Daedalus. The 'hybrid monster' (133) she produced was the Minotaur, half man and half bull.

151 *Ciris the Shearer*: Probably just a mythological bird, not otherwise identified.

155–6 *bestial / adultery*: See note on 132.

171 *tribute exacted*: Eventually achieved by Minos for the murder of Androgeos. See note on 7.457.

173a *Prince Theseus*: He had volunteered to be one of the seven youths and maidens and to kill the Minotaur.

181 *jewelled circlet*: The constellation known as Corona, the Crown.

182 *Kneeler . . . Snake*: The first is a constellation commonly identified with Hercules, the second the constellation Draco.

183 *protracted exile*: Daedalus had been expelled from Athens for murdering his nephew Perdix (241–51).

218 *ploughman*: This and the other details in 217–18 are famously captured in Pieter Brueghel the Elder's painting *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* (*c.* 1558), itself recalled by W. H. Auden in *Museé des Beaux Arts* (1940).

251 *sacred hill of Minervà*: The Acropolis at Athens.

273 *King Oeneus*: The legal father of Meleäger, who is later (437) referred to as a son of Mars.

304 *Plexippus and Toxeus*: The brothers of Meleäger's mother, Althaea.

316 *Amphiaraüs*: A prophet tricked by his wife Eriphyle into becoming one of the Argive champions who backed Polynices against his brother for the disputed sovereignty of Thebes. See notes on 9.404 and 9.407–17.

372 *before they were stars*: The constellation Gemini.

403 *Pirithoüs*: The son of Ixion (see note on 4.456) and a close friend of Theseus, with whom he later attempted to abduct Proserpina from Hades.

437 *son of Mars*: See note on 273. The description asserts Meleäger's heroic status at a dramatic moment.

544 *Deïanira*: (pronounced in five syllables) Later the wife of Hercules. Her story is told in Book 9.

546 *guinea-fowl*: Ovid's audience would know that the bird described was known in Greek as *meleagris*, a female relative of Meleäger.

549 *god Acheloüs*: West of Calydon and not really on Theseus' route back to Athens.

596–610 The received Latin text at this point appears to incorporate two alternative versions, both possibly written by Ovid himself. I have translated the shorter version, as I thought it the better one in the context.

672 *returned to the table*: There was only one wine and it was young – all that the humble hosts could afford.

738 *Mestra*: Ovid does not actually give her name, but his audience would know it from earlier versions of the story.

884 *has lost its defence*: River-gods were often represented with horns. In Book 9 Acheloüs goes on to explain how one of his horns was damaged. The detail of such a potent feature balances and recalls Nisus' crimson lock at the very start of the book (8–10).

BOOK 9

4 *gift*: Acheloüs' narrative is a kind of hospitality-gift to his guest Theseus.

14 *Jove was his father*: For the story of Hercules' birth see 285–323.

66 *in my cradle*: The infant Hercules strangled two snakes which Juno sent to destroy him.

88 *Spirit of Plenty*: The Cornucopia, the traditional horn of plenty.

123–4 *Ixion's / wheel*: See 4.461 and note on 4.456.

130 *gore from the venomous Hydra*: Hercules' arrows were tipped with the Hydra's venom. See 69–74.

140 *Princess Iole*: The captive daughter of Eurytus, king of Oechalia, a city which Hercules sacked (136).

165 *Mount Oeta*: Another geographical licence. Oeta is not on Euboea but in Trachis, on the Greek mainland.

182 *Was it for this*: Here Ovid lists a variety of Hercules' exploits, including all of the twelve labours (set him by King Eurystheus of Argos at Juno's behest) and several other feats. For the details, see the Glossary Index or a classical dictionary.

198 *supported the sky*: Hercules held up the sky for Atlas, while the giant (according to one version of the story) went to fetch the golden apples of the Hesperides (190).

233 *kingdom of Troy*: Hercules used his bow in the first destruction

of Troy, provoked by King Laömedon's broken promise (the story is told at 11.199–210).

270 *awesome authority*: Ovid uses the adjective *augustus*. The emperor was often identified with Hercules by the poets of the period.

273 *additional weight*: Hercules' apotheosis increases the weight of the sky!

294 *Lucina*: The Roman name for Ilithyia (283).

323 *through her mouth*: There was an ancient belief, referred to by Aristotle, that weasels gave birth through the mouth.

340 *lotus*: Certainly not the water-lily as we know it, although it grows near water. Dryope is later turned into a tree called the lotus (365), which the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* identifies as the nettle-tree or *Celtis australis*. It turns up again in the catalogue of trees which follow Orpheus in 10.90–105.

390–91 *eyes . . . without your help*: Dryope refers to the ritual custom of closing a dead person's eyes.

401 *her husband Hercules' prayers*: Hebe was given as wife to the deified Hercules. Iolaüs was Hercules' nephew and squire-charioteer. His youth was restored so that he could help the children of Hercules when they were being persecuted by Eurystheus (273–5).

404 *civil strife*: The dispute over the sovereignty of Thebes between the two sons of Oedipus (405), who had agreed to reign for a year in turn. When Eteocles refused to hand over after his year, his brother Polynices attacked the city with the help of six other champions from Argos (the Seven against Thebes). These included Capaneus (404), a boaster who was struck down by Zeus' lightning, and Amphiaraüs, a prophet who foresaw his own death and was swallowed up in the earth (see note on 8.316).

407–17 *his son . . . full-grown men*: Alcmaeon. A long story, obscurely compressed into a few lines. Alcmaeon killed his mother Eriphyle in revenge for his father, because she had been bribed by Polynices with the gift of a golden necklace to send Amphiaraüs off among the Seven to his death at Thebes. Driven by remorseful madness into exile, he found refuge in Arcadia at the house of Phegeus (412), whose daughter Alphesiboea he married and presented with the same necklace with which his mother had been bribed. When madness descended on him again, he wandered as far as the Acheloüs and there married the river-god's daughter Callirhoë (413). When his new wife asked him for the 'curse-ridden . . . necklace' (411–12), he returned to Phegeus, his former father-in-

law, and obtained it on a false pretext. Phegeus later discovered the truth and had Alcmaeon murdered (412). Thus Callirhoë came to ask Jupiter to accelerate her own children's coming to manhood, so that they could avenge their father's death.

424 *eye to the future*: Venus is thinking of the foundation of Rome by the descendants of Aeneas, her son by Anchises. Ovid here looks forward to the later books which cover the mythology of Rome.

435–7 *Aeacus . . . Rhadamanthus . . . Minos*: Aeacus was king (and son) of Aegina; we first met him at 7.474. Rhadamanthus and Minos (the latter also met before) were the sons of Europa. After their deaths, these three sons of Jupiter composed a trinity of judges in the underworld.

449 *famous town*: Miletus, in Caria, on the south-west coast of modern Turkey.

466 *'my master'*: *Dominus*, used as a term of affection in Latin.

507 *Aeolus' sons . . . their sisters*: Referred to in the *Odyssey* (10.1–7). In *Heroides* 11, Ovid makes one of Aeolus' daughters, Canace, write a pre-suicide letter to her brother Macareus by whom she had a child. In Byblis' questions (508) the poet could be slyly referring to his own work.

634 *new city*: Caunus in Caria.

646–7 *Cragus . . . Limyre . . . Xanthus*: Cragus is a mountain in Lycia, to the east of Caria, Limyre and Xanthus are rivers. All are well past Caunus, if Byblis is still pursuing her brother.

647 *ridge of Chimaera*: The three-formed mythical creature with the torso of a goat, as Ovid's audience would have known.

652 *Carian nymphs*: Byblis has evidently returned westward.

667 *Crete*: Byblis' father was Miletus, who had originally come from Crete (447–9) to escape from Minos. The fact provides the transition to the next story.

686 *Isis*: Last met at 1.747. The goddess is attended by other Egyptian deities and their trappings (690–94). It is interesting to ask why Ovid chose an Egyptian god (with a cult at Rome) as the presiding deity in this story rather than the Graeco-Roman Leto (Latona) in his source. Crete is, of course, in the southern Mediterranean, not too far north-west of Egypt. Perhaps the poet felt that this context called for an indubitably benign figure, untarnished by the meaner qualities with which he has vested his Olympians. Isis was known particularly as a protectress of children.

692 *child-god*: Harpocrates, the Greek name for an Egyptian god whose name meant 'Horus-child'. Statues showed him with his

finger in his mouth to suggest childhood, though the Greeks and Romans thought this denoted a call to silence.

693 *Osiris*: The husband of Isis, who was killed by his brother Seph and torn to pieces, then searched for by Isis until she secured his revival. The 'search for whom is never abandoned' refers to the annual ritual commemorating this myth.

694 *snake from Egypt*: Snakes were part of Isis-worship and associated with the life-giving properties of the Nile.

736 *Pasiphaë*: Her story was told at 8.131–7.

739 *wooden cow*: See note on 8.132.

790 *new vigour*: The name Iph*is* is derived from a Greek word for masculine strength.

792 *gifts*: The verbal link between the beginning and end of this book. In asking Acheloüs to explain his broken horn in line 1, Theseus is demanding what the river calls 'a dismal gift' (4). Here Telethusa and Iphis are called on to bring their gifts to the temple in joy. The gift motif is also used poignantly with the tunic of Nessus (133, 157, 213).

BOOK 10

13 *Taenaran gateway*: Taenarus, at the tip of the middle peninsula at the south of the Peloponnese, was a conventional entrance to the underworld.

21 *three-headed monster*: Cerberus. Orpheus is making it clear that he is not another Hercules, whose removal of the dog from Hades is referred to at 7.410–15 and 9.185.

28 *that old abduction*: The story of Proserpina's kidnap by Pluto, told by Orpheus' mother, Calliope, at 5.385–571.

41–4 *For a moment . . . boulder*: Activity in the House of the Damned (4.456) is suspended by Ovid to entertaining effect.

65 *terrified person*: Otherwise unknown. Ovid is working in a mini-metamorphosis.

68 *Lethaea*: Another obscure reference involving a mini-metamorphosis. The images of unity and separation in 70–71 fit the Orpheus story, but Eurydice was not guilty like Lethaea.

77 *Rhodope . . . Haemus*: Mountains in Thrace, referred to as metamorphosed lovers at 6.87–9. Haemus is also linked with Orpheus at 2.219–20.

78 *Pisces*: The twelfth sign of the zodiac, indicating the end of the winter. Ovid also connects the seasons with the zodiac at 126 and 165.

89 *Trees suddenly came on the scene*: Orpheus was renowned for his power to draw trees and rocks behind him with his music.

90 *oak of Dodona*: The large Eurasian oak, here associated with Jupiter's famous oracle at Dodona in Epirus. Responses were given through the rustling of the sacred oaks.
high-leaved durmast: The Italian oak, the tallest oak species.

97 *laurustinus*: An evergreen winter-flowering shrub.

104 *Attis*: The young male escort of the Phrygian mother-goddess Cybele, whose worship was fostered at Rome. His self-castration formed part of the ritual associated with the cult. The pine tree also featured, but Attis' actual metamorphosis into a pine seems to be an invention of Ovid's.

126 *Cancer the Crab*: This stands for the beginning of summer, though in 127 Ovid imagines the Crab as literally alive on the seashore.

142 *always be there . . . loved ones*: The cypress was traditionally the tree of death and funerals.

148 *Let Jove be the start*: The grand invocation of Jupiter, and a fresh reference to the Gigantomachy (see 1.152–62, 5.319) on the plains of Phlegraea (150–51), are in mock contrast with Orpheus' subject-matter as projected in 152–4.

182 *unthinkingly*: Just like Cyparissus (130).

206 *My sighs . . . in the marks of a new flower*: The letters AIAI, a Greek word of lamentation. See 215–16.

207 *Aias*: The Greek form of Ajax, whose death and production of a hyacinth from his blood are described at 13.383b–96. Sophocles in his tragedy *Ajax* played on the pun between his hero's name and the Greek word for 'Alas!' (206). The point recurs at 13.396–8.

213 *deepest red*: The Roman hyacinth is evidently not the species we should recognize.

237 *fierce young bulls*: So now very suitable for sacrifice themselves.

240–41 *offer their bodies . . . for sale*: Ovid is making his own intriguing use of the historical fact that temple prostitutes practised their trade in the shrine of Venus at Paphos.

251 *if modesty didn't preclude it*: The old idea that nudity is 'art' in stillness, but indecent in motion.

305 *congratulate this domain*: Orpheus is speaking and so made, ironically, to ignore the Thracian predilection for sex noted at 6.458–60 and also the practices introduced by himself in 83–5. Since, however, we may well have forgotten about Orpheus, the minstrel's voice in Thrace may here be subtly merged with the voice of Ovid at Rome.

448 *golden moon*: A symbol of chastity, which has appropriately fled in horror.

450–51 *Icarus . . . Erigone*: An ideal father–daughter pair to contrast with Cinyras and Myrrha. When Icarus (not Daedalus' son and better known as Icarius) was killed, Erigone hanged herself and they both joined the constellations as Boötes (446) and Virgo.

480 *Saba*: Myrrha is now back in Arabia.

565 *Atalanta*: A different Atalanta from the Arcadian girl admired by Meleäger in Book 8.

696 *tower-crowned*: Cybele, the 'Mighty Mother' (704), was commonly represented with a 'battlemented' crown.

698 *too light*: The actual punishment of metamorphosis into tamed lions hardly seems more severe than consignment to the underworld.

705 *avoid the lions*: Venus' story may have explained why she detests lions (552) but is hardly a forceful warning against the hunting of more dangerous animals. Anyway, Adonis ignores it (709).

715 *its tusks*: The Latin echoes the word used for the 'fang' of the viper which bit the foot of Eurydice (10). The book ends as it began with the image of the corpse of a young person whose death has been caused by an animal 'tooth' or 'teeth'.

726 *shall be re-enacted*: Adonis' death was ritually commemorated in a summer festival, like the Hyacinthia at Sparta (219), called the Adonia.

728 *Proserpina*: This balances the mention of the goddess as the power whom Orpheus first appeals to when he visits the underworld at the beginning of the book (15). There is little other reason for her to appear at this point.

736 *pomegranate fruit*: Another reminder of Proserpina. See 5.536–8.

738 *anemone – wind-flower*: *Anemos* is the Greek word for 'wind'.

BOOK 11

1 *Thracian minstrel*: Orpheus here returns to the foreground.

25–6 *morning fight / in the amphitheatre*: The simile, as at 3.111, is drawn from the contemporary Roman world of popular entertainment. Gladiatorial contests were preceded in the morning by shows of animal hunting.

67 *priest of his mysteries*: Orpheus was prominent in the cult of Dionysus. See 92–3.

88 *precious sand*: See 142–5.

90 *Silenus*: See 4.26–8.

93 *Eumolpus*: The founder of the Mysteries at Eleusis near Athens, which historically included a 'descent into Hades' like that of Orpheus.
117 *Danaë's virtue*: See note on 4.611.
156 *Tmolus as judge*: The mountain here becomes a god in human form, like the river Acheloüs (8.549–610 and 9.1–88).
181 *tiara*: A kind of turban which fastened under the chin.
195–6 *straits of . . . Helle*: The Hellespont or the modern Dardanelles.
219 *grandfather*: Jupiter was Peleus' grandfather through Aeacus, the king of Aegina encountered in Book 7.
221 *Proteus*: See 8.731–7. Here the old man of the sea is a sort of prophet.
268 *Phocus, his half-brother*: The son of the Nereïd Psamathe. Peleus and Telamon were supposed to have killed him because he excelled in athletic sports.
273 *his brother*: Daedalion, whose story is told at 291–300.
400 *Thetis*: Returned now, evidently, to the sea.
413 *Claros*: Apollo's oracle here was second only to that of Delphi.
578 *Juno's temple*: Juno as the goddess of marriage.
584–5 *polluted by unclean / hands*: Until a dead man had been properly buried, his family was regarded as unclean.
592 *Cimmerian country*: The Cimmerians were a mythical people who were said to dwell by Ocean in mist and cloud, close to the country of dreams.
599 *watchful geese*: See note on 2.538.
603 *Lethe*: Here located, by poetic licence, in Cimmerian territory.
639 *Icelos . . . Phobetor*: 'Like' . . . 'Scarer'.
751 *same person*: Ovid is making a joke of his own vagueness regarding the identity of his narrator.
776 *fugitive's foot*: Here, near the end of the book, we are inevitably reminded of Eurydice, and so of Orpheus, with whose image the book began.

BOOK 12

1 *Priam*: Aesacus' metamorphosis to the diver at the end of Book 11 leads on at once to his royal father. For the relationship of lines 1–4 with the end of the book, see note on 614.
5–6 *prince . . . stolen bride*: The traditional cause of the Trojan War. Paris breached the laws of hospitality by eloping with Helen, the wife of Menelaüs, king of Sparta. The Greek fleet of a thousand ships, raised to rescue Helen and punish the Trojans, was

assembled under the command of Agamemnon, king of Mycenae and Menelaüs' brother.

28 *virgin goddess*: Diana, whom Agamemnon had offended by (in some versions) shooting one of her deer. The sacrifice of Iphigenia was a favourite theme in Greek and Roman tragedy.

68–70 *Danaäns . . . Achaean . . . Phrygian*: Variant names, the first two for the Greeks, the last for the Trojans.

72 *Cycnus*: The third Cycnus in the poem, yet another to be metamorphosed to a swan.

109–12 *when I led the attack . . . touched by my spear*: In these lines Achilles is referring to various of his exploits in the early part of the Trojan War, outside Troy itself. Telephus was the king of Mysia, wounded by Achilles on his way to Troy and later healed with the touch of rust from the same spear in accordance with an oracle.

151 *Athena*: Achilles might have been wiser to placate Neptune, Cycnus' father. See 580–97.

175 *as a woman*: Called Caenis (189). The names Caeneus and Caenis derive from a Greek word for 'new', a point picked up by Ovid in the 'novelty' of Nestor's pronouncement.

211 *cloud-born centaurs*: The cloud was an imitation of Juno, made by Jupiter and impregnated by Ixion (see note on 4.456), who was also the father of Pirithoüs.

229 *injure us both*: Theseus and Pirithoüs were well known as bosom friends. The following two lines (230–31) are omitted in this translation as spurious.

309 *reserved for Hercules' bow*: The story has already been told at 9.101–30, but Nestor's narration refers to the more distant past.

445 *I ought to have come to . . . Troy*: Nestor here deplores the old age he took some pride in at 185–8.

455 *Mopsus*: Here commended for his fighting qualities. His prophetic powers are deployed at 530–32.

521 *Mount Ida*: A reminder that the story is being narrated by Nestor at Troy.

524 *rust-winged bird*: Apparently unique (526, 531) and not otherwise identified.

537–8 *his father . . . not been mentioned*: At 9.191 Hercules includes his fight with the centaurs in the list of his achievements. He was certainly involved on the Lapith side in one traditional account of the battle.

581–2 *Phaëthon's / friend*: See 2.367–9.

585 *Sminthian*: A title Apollo is given once in Homer's *Iliad* (1.39),

referring to Sminthe, a place near Troy, or meaning 'protector against mice' (*sminthos* is Greek for 'mouse')

587 *unrewarded*: See 11.199–206.

591 *Hector, whose body was dragged*: After Achilles had killed Hector, he dragged the dead hero's body behind his chariot wheels three times a day around the walls of Troy (*Iliad* 22).

595 *I may not engage . . . directly*: The tradition was clear that Achilles was shot in the heel by Paris, with Apollo's help.

597 *accorded with Neptune's*: Apollo always sides with the Trojans in Homer.

611 *Penthesilea*: The queen of the Amazons, who came to help the Trojans after the death of Hector.

614 *ended in flames*: The obsequies of Achilles balance those of Aesacus in the first four lines of the book. Where Aesacus' body is not present to occupy a 'tomb', Achilles' ashes are 'barely sufficient / to fill an urn' (616–17). There are two verbal links: as 'the pride and bulwark / of Greece's *name*' (612–13), Achilles may recall the 'name' (2) inscribed on Priam's son's empty tomb; and the Latin adjective used to describe Hector's funeral-gifts offered 'to no good purpose' (4) is the same as that used for 'shadowy' (619) Hades. Shifts in the meaning of words are another kind of metamorphosis.

BOOK 13

2 *sevenfold shield*: Ajax's famous tower-like shield, made of seven layers of oxhide. See 347.

6 *in front of these vessels*: Ajax uses the debate's setting to remind his audience of his great defence of the Greek fleet as described by Homer in *Iliad* 15.674 ff.

8a *He beat a hasty retreat*: There is no mention of this in Homer!

31 *Sisyphus' scion*: Ajax follows a tradition that the trickster Sisyphus, not Laertes, was Ulysses' natural father.

35 *sneaking informer*: Ajax alludes to a post-Homeric story in which Ulysses pretended to be mad in order to avoid service at Troy but was caught out by Palamedes, on whom Ulysses later took revenge by getting him put to death on a false charge (56–60).

46 *Philoctetes*: A Greek who inherited Hercules' unerring bow and arrows. On the voyage to Troy he was bitten on the foot by a snake on the island of Lemnos and marooned there because the stench of his wound made him unbearable to live with. In the tenth year of the war, after an oracle declared that Troy could

not be captured without Hercules' weapons, Ulysses was dispatched to Lemnos to fetch them, along with Philoctetes himself. The story was dramatized in an extant play by Sophocles.

64 *desertion of Nestor*: An incident occurring in *Iliad* 8.80 ff., though there it is Diomedes and not Nestor himself who shouts for Ulysses' help.

71 *Ulysses . . . in need of the help*: Another incident in the *Iliad* (11.456 ff.), when Ulysses, who has been bravely fighting against impossible odds, is rescued by Ajax and Menelaüs. In Homer there is no question of his cowardice and he is in fact wounded (contrast 81).

82–94 *Hector arrived . . . return*: Ajax once again presses the details of Homer's story unfairly to his own advantage. Ulysses answers him at 268–369.

98a *Rhesus*: The king of Thrace and one of Troy's allies. In *Iliad* 10 Ulysses makes a night raid on his camp and captures his horses. The incident is described by Ulysses at 249–52.

98b *Dolon*: A Trojan spy whom Ulysses and Diomedes capture on their night raid and so obtain information about the enemy.

98b–99 *Helenus . . . Athena's statue*: Helenus was a son of Priam and a prophet who was said by the Greek seer Calchas to know how Troy could be taken. In one of the Epic Cycle poems Ulysses and Diomedes (after the death of Ajax, though) entered Troy and forced Helenus to reveal that the city would fall if the Trojans were deprived of the Palladium, a wooden image of Athena/Minerva. This the two Greeks later returned to capture, an achievement which Ulysses makes much of at 334–49 and 373–6.

110 *the shield*: Achilles' famous shield, made for him by Hephaestus/Vulcan and engraved with a wealth of scenes from everyday life (*Iliad* 18.478 ff.). Ulysses later (286–95) uses the shield to make a point against Ajax.

145 *convict in exile*: Peleus, Achilles' father and Ajax's uncle, had murdered his half-brother Phocus (11.267–9). Ulysses forbears to include his knavish grandfather Autolycus (11.312–15) in his own pedigree.

156 *Phthia or Scyros*: The homes, respectively, of Peleus and Pyrrhus.

157 *Teucer*: Ajax's half-brother by his father Telamon and so equally Achilles' cousin.

172 *Telephus*: See note on 12.109–12.

185 *his innocent daughter*: Iphigenia (12.28–34).

187 *my persuasions*: An invention of Ovid's Ulysses, introduced to

win over Agamemnon to his side by aligning himself with the king over the sacrifice.

193 *the mother*: Clytemnestra, who was tricked into sending her daughter to Aulis in the belief that she was to marry Achilles.

196 *as an envoy*: Ulysses' and Menelaüs' embassy to Troy is referred to twice in the *Iliad* (3.205 ff., 11.138 ff.).

217 *abort operations*: In *Iliad* 2 Agamemnon gives an order for flight to test the loyalty of his troops, in the hope that they will all refuse. Unfortunately they start to obey. Though Ulysses plays a part in halting the retreat, what he says here about Ajax is not in Homer.

232 *Thersites*: A noisy trouble-maker who abuses Agamemnon in the assembly, *Iliad* 2.212 ff., and is thrashed by Ulysses for his insolence.

252 *in glorious triumph*: Ulysses does not include Diomedes in his celebrations.

273 *Patroclus*: Achilles' friend, who fought in his armour and whose killing by Hector brought Achilles back into battle.

289 *fresh arms*: The new arms made for Achilles by Vulcan at his mother's request, since the old ones had been lost with Patroclus.

301 *he by his mother's*: See 162–70.

312 *bribes he had taken*: In fact the gold which Ulysses had himself contrived to 'plant' under Palamedes' tent.

391 *never been wounded before*: Ovid is probably alluding to a post-Homeric tradition that Ajax was vulnerable only to himself.

398 *AIAI*: See notes on 10.206 and 10.207.

400 *murdered their husbands*: The women of Lemnos were punished for neglecting the worship of Aphrodite/Venus by being inflicted with an unpleasant smell. Their husbands resorted to other women and were consequently murdered.

415 *cast from the towers*: The death of Astyanax plays a major part in Euripides' *Trojan Women* (see introduction to this book).

423 *Hecuba*: The widow of Priam and traditionally a paradigm of human suffering, in Renaissance as well as classical literature.

444 *in murderous anger*: Ovid recalls the initial quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon in *Iliad* 1.

618 *Memnonides*: Daughters of Memnon, usually identified with ruffs on the basis of the birds' fighting habits.

618–19 *Each year . . . die like their parents*: The reference is to the annual Roman festival of the Parentalia, when sacrifices were offered to the dead and gladiatorial contests also were held.

622 *morning dew . . . mourning*: The translation attempts to produce

an equivalent for Ovid's pun, which links the dawn goddess Au*rora* with *rorare*, 'to bedew'. The use of 'dutiful' at the end of this story is also a link with the 'dutiful' Aeneas near the start of the next (see note on 627).

627 *Aeneas the dutiful*: Virgil (followed here by Ovid) famously characterizes his hero with the Latin epithet *pius*. *Pietas* denotes a sense of duty, a quality of commitment to the claims of religion, country and family.

635 *pangs of her labour*: See 6.332–6.

678a–b *search for . . . kindred shores*: The oracle comes directly from Virgil's *Aeneid* 3.94–8 and refers to Italy, since Dardanus, the ancestor of the Trojans, was supposed to have come from Latium.

685 *stood for the name of the city*: Thebes was renowned for its seven gates.

695 *died for their people*: Orion's daughters sacrificed themselves to save their country from a plague. Lines 693–4 in the original have been omitted.

706 *owed their descent*: The Trojans were known as Teucrians as well as Dardanians (see note on 678a–b). The landing in Crete is a false start on the voyage to found a new Troy.

710 *Aëllo the Harpy*: She cryptically warned the Trojans that hunger would force them to 'eat their tables' when they arrived in Italy (*Aeneid* 3.255–7).

713–14 *three gods . . . shepherd judge*: The rival gods were Apollo, Diana and Hercules, who chose a wise old shepherd, Cragaleus, as arbiter. When the judge awarded Ambracia to Hercules, Apollo turned the shepherd to stone.

715–16 *Apollo's / temple at Actium*: The temple on the promontory near which Octavian (later Augustus) won his celebrated victory over Antony and Cleopatra. Apollo's patronage was an important feature of the Augustan legend.

718a *Munichus*: Jupiter changed him and his sons into birds as a reward for their piety.

720–21 *Helenus . . . New Troy*: The son of Priam, referred to earlier in the book (see note on 98b–99), who like Aeneas had escaped after the fall of Troy and founded a new city in north-west Greece.

844 *some Jove or other*: Contempt of the gods is a feature of the Homeric Cyclops.

854 *my father*: Neptune.

897 *river*: The Acis rose at the foot of Mount Etna and reached the sea on the east coast of Sicily.

910 *huge crag*: The feature foreshadows the monster Scylla's future lair (14.72–4)

919 *Palaemon*: See 4.542.

965–6 *still speaking . . . said more*: The book began with a speech by Ajax. Its pervasive theme of speech is reiterated once more at the very end.

BOOK 14

8 *Etruscan Sea*: Off south-west Italy.

28a *betrayed her affair with Mars*: See 4.171–89.

73 *changed to a headland of rock*: The timing of Scylla's second metamorphosis is inconsistent with 13.732–3, where Aeneas' ship is evidently in danger of Scylla the monster.

78 *Sidonian Dido*: The queen who founded Carthage in north Africa came from the Phoenician city of Sidon. Her tragic love-affair with Aeneas is the subject of Virgil *Aeneid* 4. Aeneas abandoned her when ordered by Jupiter to pursue his higher destiny of founding a new Troy in Italy. Ovid explored Dido's predicament in *Heroides* 7.

85 *the fleet . . . at Juno's bidding*: An incident treated by Virgil in *Aeneid* 5.

111 *Pluto's realm*: Aeneas' visit to the underworld is the subject of *Aeneid* 6, arguably the finest book in Virgil's epic.

152 *voice by which men will know me*: This suggests disembodied voices proceeding from the prophetess's cave, as in *Aeneid* 6.43.

158a *faithful nurse*: Caieta, whose death and burial are mentioned at 441–4.

160 *Achaemenides*: His rescue by Aeneas comes in Virgil, but his meeting with Macareus is a convenient invention of Ovid's.

168 *Polyphemus*: The Cyclops is an even wilder creature here than in 13.759–69. The story is based on Homer *Odyssey* 9.

223 *had visited Aeolus*: The story now is based on *Odyssey* 10.

252 *boozy Elpenor*: So called because later on in the Homeric story he goes to sleep drunk on Circe's roof and topples over the edge to his death.

279–80 *to prickle . . . with bristles*: Ovid's typical enjoyment of all the details of this metamorphosis is worth contrasting with the economy (and pathos) of the change as described by Homer in *Odyssey* 10.239–41.

320 *Picus*: Here we leave Homer and move on to Italian mythology.

331–2 *Tauric Diana's . . . pool*: Lake Aricia. Diana is the Artemis of

Euripides' *Iphigenia among the Taurians*. See note on 15.489–90.

338 *Canens, the singer*: From Latin *cano*, 'I sing'.

428 *an aria*: Canens is imagined here as the ideal singer who, even in grief, sings a proper melody as distinct from the indeterminate musical quality of normal mourning sounds.

450 *Latinus*: King of the Latins, whose daughter Lavinia had previously been betrothed to Turnus, king of the Rutuli. Hence the ensuing war.

456 *Evander*: Formerly a king in Arcadia, who emigrated to Latium, where he founded his new city of Pallanteum on the site where Rome eventually stood.

468a *Narycian Ajax*: The lesser Ajax, from Narycum in Locris.

478 *the wound I dealt her . . . long ago*: The story is told in *Iliad* 5.329 ff.

537 *Mount Ida*: Cybele had a sacred grove there.

565 *Alcinoüs' bark*: Alcinoüs was the king of the Phaeacians, who sent Ulysses back to Ithaca on one of his ships. On its return the vessel was petrified by Neptune, who hated Ulysses (*Odyssey* 13.159 ff.).

622 *Palatine people*: An anachronistic description, since the Palatine Hill at Rome had no special significance as yet.

640 *Priapus*: A deity whose obscene wooden image was often placed in Roman gardens and orchards.

642 *Vertumnus, 'the Turner'*: An Etruscan god, who was generally associated with changes in the seasons.

674 *Alban hills*: About ten miles south-east of Rome.

712 *Noricum*: Famous for its iron products.

761 *Venus the Watcher*: Ovid is here suggesting an explanation for a particular cult (or statue?) of Venus in Anaxarete's 'watching' (752).

772 *Amulius*: According to the historian Livy, he ousted his elder brother Numitor and murdered Numitor's children except for Rhea Silvia/Ilia, whom he made a vestal virgin. She nevertheless gave birth to twins, Romulus and Remus, claiming Mars as their father. Romulus helped to restore Numitor and then left Alba Longa to found Rome.

777 *Tarpeia*: The daughter of the commander of the Roman citadel on the Capitol, who was bribed by the Sabine king Tatius to admit a party of his soldiers into the fortress (here imagined as outside the city gates). Once inside, however, the men crushed her to death with their shields.

785 *Janus' shrine*: Not the temple of Janus in the later Forum, which

was closed in time of peace, but some other building close to the unbarred gate, wherever that was.

827–8 *high-placed/couches*: Effigies of the gods were displayed on raised couches at feasts of supplication.

828 *Quirinus*: Originally a Sabine god, later identified with the deified Romulus. The toga of honour was a short ceremonial robe associated with the early Roman kings. Ovid may be thinking of a known statue here.

836–7 *Quirinus' hill . . . verdant trees*: The setting provided for Hersilië's departure at the end of the book recalls the 'herb-green hills and the halls of Circe' at which Glaucus arrives near the beginning (9).

BOOK 15

1 *an enquiry*: A new 'scientific' note is struck at the outset.

1–2 *awesome burden . . . worthy successor*: Ovid is using the language of imperial responsibility, and the theme of monarchical succession is a vital element in the final episode of the poem, in which Julius Caesar is seen as being followed by the emperor Augustus (751, 850–58) and Augustus' own succession by Tiberius is also foretold (834–6).

6 *mysteries of nature*: The Latin recalls Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* ('On the nature of the universe'), a work which Ovid later draws on heavily in Pythagoras' speech.

21 *Club-Bearer*: Hercules. His club, like the lion skin, was an identifying feature of the hero.

23 *Aesar*: The river which reaches the sea just north of Croton.

50 *route*: Myscelus' approach to his destination can be roughly followed on the map, though Ovid juggles the order of some place-names to fit his metre.

60 *there lived a man*: Pythagoras, who came to Croton from Samos about 531 BC – a wild anachronism as Numa traditionally succeeded Romulus in 715 BC.

61 *tyrants*: Polycrates and his brothers.

62 *close to the gods*: The language recalls what Lucretius said of the atomic philosopher Epicurus (fourth–third century BC), who inspired his work.

67 *how the universe first began*: This and the following list of topics down to 72 fit Epicurus and Lucretius rather than what is known about Pythagoras' teaching.

96 *the title of 'Golden'*: See 1.89–112.

153–5 *terror of chill death . . . worlds*: Ovid is still putting Epicurean/Lucretian thinking into Pythagoras' mouth.

158–9 *Our souls . . . in new habitations*: Here at last Ovid introduces the Pythagorean doctrine of Reincarnation, on which the argument for vegetarianism chiefly depends (173a–5, 457–62).

179 *All is in flux*: The famous saying attributed to the early Greek philosopher Heraclitus (about 500 BC), who is also credited with the original observation about the ever-changing river.

229 *Milo the wrestler*: A famous contemporary and disciple of Pythagoras.

233 *twice abducted*: Helen was carried off by Theseus before she eloped with Paris.

237 *elements*: The doctrine of Empedocles. See note on 1.24.

319 *Salmacis' pool*: See 4.285–388.

336 *Ortygia*: Delos. See note on 5.640.

364–5 *bees will be born . . . mouldering carcass*: The same strange process is described by Virgil in *Georgics* 4.281 ff. Like Ovid's other examples in 368–71, it is more folklore than fact.

374 *on a tombstone*: The human soul was often represented on tombs as a butterfly.

393 *phoenix*: A symbol of resurrection and immortality even today.

394 *amomum*: An unidentified eastern spice plant.

406 *sun god's city*: Heliopolis in Egypt.

415 *coral*: See 4.744–52.

437 *Helenus*: See 13.720–22. In Virgil (*Aeneid* 3.374 ff.) the prophecy of 439–49 is made to Aeneas *after* Troy's fall and in Buthrotum, where Pythagoras (as Euphorbus) could not have been present.

449 *destined for heaven*: At the middle of this final book, Ovid anticipates the apotheosis of Augustus envisaged at the end (868–70).

451 *my kinsmen*: Pythagoras imagines himself once more as the reincarnated Trojan Euphorbus.

462 *Thyestes*: His brother Atreus, with whom he had quarrelled, served him with the flesh of his two sons – the so-called 'Thyestean banquet'.

489–90 *Tauric / Diana*: The story went that, when Orestes rescued his sister Iphigenia from the Taurians in the Crimea (dramatized in Euripides' play *Iphigenia among the Taurians*), he removed the cult-image of Diana and set it up in Aricia.

497 *Hippolytus*: Another Euripidean hero, identified with the local deity Virbius, who shared the sanctuary at Aricia. 500–505 summarizes the main action of the tragedy *Hippolytus* and 506–29 is Ovid's version of the messenger-speech. The predicament

of Hippolytus' stepmother, Phaedra, had been explored in *Heroides* 4.

511 *bull*: Sent by Neptune in response to his son Theseus' curse (505).

534 *Aesculapius*: See notes on 2.629 and 2.648. His mention here foreshadows the penultimate story of the poem at 622–744.

543 *remind me of horses*: The etymology of the name Hippolytus is 'horse-loosed'.

565 *Cipus*: A praetor (high executive) in the early republican period.

581 *O King!*: 'King' was a word of evil omen after the expulsion of the Roman kings and the institution of the Republic.

589 *than reign as king*: Cipus' rejection of kingship will have echoed actions of Julius Caesar and Augustus who, while in effect monarchs, rejected the outward forms of kingship to placate their republican-minded opponents. Ovid seems here to be subtly foreshadowing the personalities of his final episode. See Introduction, p. xviii.

622 *O Muses*: This grand invocation gives weight and solemnity to the story which follows.

626 *terrible plague*: An actual event dated to 293 BC. Aesculapius' cult was introduced to Rome in the following year.

643 *Epidaurus*: Where the Greek sanctuary of Asclepius was established and sick people attended for cures.

701 *his voyage continued*: There are obscurities in the geography, but the sound of the place-names has an effect in itself which lends dignity to the god's arrival in Italy.

713 *medicinal springs*: Perhaps a reference to the famous resort at Baiae.

717 *Antiphates*: See 14.233–40.

758a *having begotten*: Augustus was in fact Julius Caesar's great-nephew, adopted and appointed his heir under Julius' will. We may suspect a touch of Ovidian irony here and in 760–61.

763 *priest*: Caesar was the Pontifex Maximus in charge of the state religion.

769 *Greek Diomedes*: An incident in *Iliad* 5.335 ff.

782 *clear signs*: The passage which follows rivals Virgil's description of the portents in *Georgics* 1. 464 ff.

800 *hall of the Senate*: The Curia Pompeia, a consecrated building outside the city boundary.

809 *Records of Fortune*: Ovid amusingly makes Jupiter use the term for Rome's public record office.

822 *Mutina*: The site of a siege and a battle in 43 BC, when Mark Antony's forces were defeated by an army led by the consuls (who

both were killed), with the young Octavian (later Augustus) present.

823–4 *Pharsalus' plain . . . field of Philippi*: Julius Caesar defeated Pompey in 48 BC at the battle of Pharsalia in Thessaly; while Octavian and Mark Antony defeated Brutus and Cassius in 42 BC at Philippi in Macedonia. The two fields were about 150 miles apart, but Ovid followed Virgil in treating them as if they were the same place.

825 *Sextus Pompeius*: The youngest son of Pompey the Great, defeated by Agrippa in 36 BC.

826 *Egyptian mistress*: Queen Cleopatra, who allied herself to Mark Antony and fled ahead of him from Octavian at the battle of Actium in 31 BC.

836 *Livia's son*: Livia was Augustus' empress and her son was Tiberius, by her previous husband.

840–41 *cut-ridden body . . . comet*: Ovid here is punning on Caesar's name. See Introduction, p. xxxi.

842 *height of his shrine in the Forum*: The image of a comet was placed on the head of the deified Julius' statue in his temple in the Forum; and a coin of 36 BC shows a star in the same temple's pediment or 'height'.

846 *component atoms*: Lucretian language, here rather bizarrely employed.

860 *each is ruler and father*: Jupiter is the father of gods: Augustus bears the title *Pater Patriae*, father of the fatherland. The equation between Jupiter and Augustus at 858–60 seems flattering, but would Augustus have appreciated it in the light of Ovid's irreverent and satirical presentation of Jupiter in so many stories of the poem?

865 *neighbour of Caesar*: The temple of Apollo and a shrine of Vesta formed part of the complex of imperial buildings on the Palatine.

866 *heights of Tarpeia*: The Capitol, where Jupiter had his great temple.

872 *Jupiter's wrath*: Ostensibly the lightning, but the image could also refer to Augustus and Ovid's punishment. If so, the words must be a late addition of Ovid's (see note on 3.142).

Glossary Index

This Glossary Index is not exhaustive, but all the names of any importance in the poem have been included. The list of references for each individual entry is complete, but see the next paragraph; references are to lines of the translation.

Where a character or place is referred to by more than one name, a cross-reference is given. Where, however, a name X occurs in the text in a phrase such as 'son *or* daughter of X', the reference will be found only under the character actually referred to as the son/daughter of X.

Further information is given against all but the most obvious headwords, and some context is given against each reference in the entries for people and gods; the reader is advised also to consult any notes on individual passages cited, since this Glossary Index does not include direct references to those notes and overlaps with them have been avoided.

Conventional English forms of classical names are used where they exist (e.g. Jupiter, Priam, Athens). Otherwise, Latin spellings are preferred to Greek, except in the case of very familiar Greek place-names (e.g. Delos, Samos).

The assumed stressing of classical names for the purposes of rhythmical delivery is by an acute accent on the headword (though obviously not on monosyllables). The translation follows the traditional conventions for pronouncing Greek and Latin names in English. In words of two syllables the stress falls on the first (which is then often lengthened in English). In words of more than two syllables, the stress falls on the penultimate syllable when that is quantitatively *heavy* in the ancient languages (e.g. Achílles, Agamémnon, Ulýsses), but on the previous syllable if the penultimate is *light* (e.g. Aéolus, Autólycus, Prosérpina). The latter sometimes results in a short antepenultimate being artificially lengthened in English (e.g. Alcýone and Callíope, both with the second syllable pronounced like 'eye').

The following may also help with pronouncing unfamiliar names:

Vowels

ae and oe	'ee'	as in Aeneas, Caesar, Phoebus
au	'or'	as in Augustus
eu	'yoo'	as in Perseus, Theseus (each as two syllables, rhyming with 'deuce')

A diaeresis shows that two adjoining vowels which could represent a diphthong are to be pronounced separately; it is written over the second sound (e.g. Alpheüs, Autonoë, Ceÿx, Danaë, Pirithoüs). A vowel at the end of a name is to be pronounced (as in Penelope); the only exceptions to this are Crete, Jove, Neptune, Peloponnese and Rome.

Consonants

c is soft (like *s*) before *e*, *ae*, *oe*, *i* and *y*; hard (like *k*) before *a*, *o* and *u*.
ch is equivalent to a hard *c*.
g is soft (as in 'giant') before *e* and *i*.

RA

Ábas (1) *a companion of Diomedes (2)* turned into a swan-like bird 14.505–6.

Ábas (2) *a centaur* 12.306.

Acástus *king of Thessaly, son of Pelias* at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.306; cleanses Peleus 11.409.

Acéstes *a king of Sicily* visited by Aeneas 14.83.

Achaéa (1) (adj. Achaean) *a country in the northern Peloponnese, here (as often in epic verse) representing Greece as a whole* 5.578, 15.293.

Achaéa (2) *a region in northern Greece to the south of Thessaly* 5.306.

Achaeménides *a companion of Ulysses, rescued by Aeneas from the Cyclops* reunited with Macareus (3), tells of Ulysses' men in Polyphemus' cave 14.160–222.

Achelóüs *a river in northern Greece separating Acarnania and Aetolia; its god* entertains Theseus 8.549–76, 727–8; anger at naiads 8.577–89; loves Perimele 8.590–610; ability to change his shape 8.879–83; battle with Hercules 9.2–100.

Ácheron *a river in the underworld; its god, the lover of Orphne and supposed father of Ascalaphus* 5.541.

Achílles *the bravest and most famous warrior among the Greeks in the Trojan War, son of Peleus and Thetis* his conception 11.265; fights Cycnus (3) 12.73–144; victory celebration 12.146–72; his family 12.191–5; at his victory celebration 12.363; his death 12.582–620; his arms competed for after his death 13.1–383; cousin of Ajax

13.30–31; his golden helmet 13.105; his absence 13.130–34; his life and deeds 13.162–80; Ulysses retrieves his corpse 13.280–85; his arms described 13.287–94; drawn to take part in the Trojan War 13.297–305; his ghost 13.441–9; his enduring anger 13.499–504; kills Memnon 13.580–97; inherits his father's position 15.856.

Ácis *son of Faunus (1) and a nymph (the daughter of the river Symaethus)* lover of Galatea 13.750–59, 787–884; his death 13.883–4; changed into a river in Sicily 13.885–97.

Ácmon *a companion of Diomedes* insults Venus 14.485–512; changed into a swan-like bird 14.497–502.

Acoétes *a ship's captain from Lydia* participant in bacchic rites 3.582–700.

Acónteus *one of Perseus' companions* turned to stone by the head of Medusa 5.200–206.

Acrísius *king of Argos, son of Abas (1), brother of Proetus (1), father of Danaë and grandfather of Perseus* rejects Bacchus 3.559–60, 4.607–14; driven from the throne by his brother 5.239.

Ácrota *a king of Alba* 14.616–20.

Actaéon *grandson of Cadmus, son of Autonoë* while hunting, comes across Diana bathing naked in a grotto 3.139–252; changed into a stag by Diana 3.194–8; his fate fails to move his mother in her frenzy 3.720.

Áctium *a promontory in Acarnania, location of a naval battle between Octavian and Antony in 31 BC* 13.715.

Admétus *son of a king in Thessaly* present at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.310.

Adónis *favourite of Venus, son of Myrrha (from the incestuous relationship with her father)* grows in the trunk of the tree that his mother became, loved by Venus 10.503–59; told the story of Atalanta 10.579, 681; killed by his own hounds 10.705–38; changed into the anemone 10.734–8.

Aéacus *ruler of Aegina (2), son of Jupiter and Aegina (1), father of Telamon* refuses to ally his kingdom with Minos, supports Athens 7.472–517; tells how the island was repopulated 7.615–67; provides military support for Athens 7.863–5; favoured by his father, Jupiter 9.435–40; ancestor of Ajax 13.25–33.

Aeëtes *king of Colchis, son of the Sun and Persa, father of Medea* sets tasks for Jason and the Argonauts 7.7–9; presides over Jason's challenge 7.102–3; betrayed and abandoned by Medea 7.170–71.

Aegaéon *a sea-god* 2.9–10.

Aegéan Sea *the sea between Greece and Asia Minor* 9.448, 11.663.

Aégeus *king of Athens, son of Pandion, father of Theseus* nearly kills

Theseus with Medea's poison 7.402–54; seeks aid from Aegina (2) 7.502–3; as father of Theseus 15.856.

Aegína (1) *daughter of Asopus, mother of Aeacus* raped by Jupiter 6.113.

Aegína (2) *an island in the Saronic Gulf formerly called Oenopia, named after Aegina (1)* aid for Athens against Minos sought by Cephalus 7.472–522, 8.4; beset by plague 7.523–614; repopulated 7.615–60.

Aëllo *one of the Harpies* 13.710.

Aenéas *Trojan hero, son of Anchises and Venus* his journey from Troy 13.624–33; model of courage 13.665; given a mixing bowl by Anius 13.681; welcomed by Dido, then leaves her 14.78–9; his journey to Italy 14.82–90; visits his father in Hades, guided by the Sibyl 14.101–56; at Caieta 14.157–62; respected by Achaemenides 14.170–71; advised by Macareus (3) to avoid Circe's island 14.245–7; buries his nurse (Caieta), arrives in Latium, marries Lavinia, battles with Turnus 14.441–56; aided to victory by his mother 14.572–3; changed into a god 14.581–607; receives Helenus' prophecy at the fall of Troy 15.437–51; model of piety 15.681; burial of Caieta 15.718; Venus his mother 15.761; his wanderings 15.771–3; as forefather of Julius Caesar 15.805; rescued from Diomedes by Venus 15.807; watched over by gods in his suffering 15.861–2.

Aeólia *the northern part of the coast of Asia Minor* 7.357.

Aeólian islands *islands between Italy and Sicily, where the cave in which Aeolus kept the winds was sited* 14.86–7; 15.706.

Aéolus (1) (adj. Aeolian) *god of the winds, son of Hippotas, father of Canace and Alcyone* 1.264, 4.663–4; his incestuous children 9.507; his power 11.431–2; father of Alcyone 11.444; confines the winds during the halcyon's nesting season 11.747–8; aids Ulysses with favourable winds 14.223–32; his island 15.706.

Aéolus (2) *first ruler of Thessaly, son of Hellen, father of Athamas and Sisyphus* 4.466, 486.

Aésacus *son of Priam and Alexirhoë (nymph daughter of the river-god Granicus), half-brother of Hector* loves Hesperia 11.762–95; turned into a diver 11.785–94; mourned by Priam 12.1–4.

Aésar *a river in southern Italy* 15.23, 54.

Aesculápius [Greek **Asclepios**] *god of healing, son of Coronis and Apollo, often seen in the form of a snake* Ocyrhoë prophesies his future 2.462–8; rescued from his dead mother's womb 2.609, 629–35; heals Hippolytus 15.534; brought to Rome from Greece 15.624–5, 639–745.

Aéson *prince of Thessaly, brother of Pelias, father of Jason* father of Jason 7.84; too old to rejoice in Jason's return 7.162–4; made young again by Medea 7.252–93, 303.

Aetólia *a country in central Greece* 7.382, 8.281.

Africa 14.77; *see also* **Libya.**

Agamémnon *king of Mycenae, Greek commander-in-chief in the Trojan War, son of Atreus, brother of Menelaüs, husband of Clytemnestra, father of Orestes, Iphigenia and Electra* sacrifices Iphigenia 12.29, 13.185–93; summons council to decide who should receive Achilles' shield 12.624–7; deceived by Jupiter into calling off the Trojan War 13.216–18; calls an assembly 13.230; hated by Philoctetes 13.329; brother of Menelaüs 13.359; visited by Achilles' ghost 13.439–44; seizes Anius' daughters 13.655–9; inherits his father's position 15.855.

Agáve *daughter of Cadmus, mother of Pentheus* takes part in bacchic rites 3.713–28; kills her son 3.725–8, 4.424–5.

Agénor *king of Phoenicia, father of Cadmus and Europa* 3.3–8.

Aglaúros *daughter of Cecrops, sister of Herse and Pandrosos* discovers Erichthonius 2.559–61; jealous of Mercury's desire for her sister, Herse 2.738–835; changed into a statue by Mercury 2.819–32.

Ájax (1) *son of Telamon, a Greek hero in the Trojan War* connected with the hyacinth 10.207; competes for Achilles' shield 12.624; at the contest for Achilles' arms, his deeds in the Trojan War described 13.2–383; his suicide 13.384–92; his blood produces a flower 13.394–8.

Ájax (2) *so-called 'lesser Ajax', son of Oileus, from Narycum in Locris* his bravery in the Trojan War 13.356; rapes Cassandra 14.468–9.

Álba (1) (adj. Alban) *a settlement in Latium on the ridge of what is now Monte Cavo, founded by Ascanius, mother city of Rome* 14.608, 674; 15.547.

Álba (2) *a king of Alba (1)* 14.611.

Alcáthoë *a city on the Megarian coast* 8.8.

Alcídamas *father of Ctesylla* 7.369–70.

Alcínoüs *king of the Phaeacians (a people on an island sometimes identified with Corcyra, known only from myth)* fate of the ship he lent to Ulysses 14.563–5.

Alcíthoë *daughter of Minyas* rejects Bacchus 4.2–4; tells story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus 4.274–389; *see also* **Minyas, daughters of.**

Alcmaéon *son of Amphiaraüs and Eriphyle* his fate foretold 9.407–12.

Alcména *wife of Amphitryon, daughter of Electryon, mother of Hercules* raped by Jupiter 6.112; her alleged adultery with Jupiter 9.23–6; tells of Hercules' birth 9.275–325; weeps at Dryope's fate 9.395–7.

Alcýone *daughter of Aeolus (1), wife of Ceÿx* as a kingfisher 7.401; pleads with Ceÿx not to pursue the wolf-monster 11.383–92; pleads with Ceÿx not to travel to Claros 11.415–73; longed for by Ceÿx 11.543–6; unaware of Ceÿx's demise 11.573–88; told in a dream of her husband's death 11.628; her lament 11.652–746; turned into a kingfisher 11.731–3.

Álmo *a river that flows into the Tiber* 14.330.

Alphénor *son of Niobe* his death 6.247–54.

Alphëüs *a river in Elis; its god* 2.250; 5.487; pursues Arethusa 5.577–642.

Alps *a mountain range* 2.226, 14.795.

Althaéa *wife of Oeneus, mother of Meleäger* seeks revenge for her brothers' deaths at the hands of Meleäger 8.445–514.

Ámathus *a city on Cyprus, sacred to Venus* 10.220.

Ámazons *a tribe of warrior women who lived by the river Thermodon* 12.611.

Ambrácia *a city in southern Epirus* 13.713–16.

Amenánus *a river on Sicily* 15.279–80.

Ámmon (1) *an Egyptian and Libyan god in the form of a ram, identified by the Romans with Jupiter* 4.670; 5.17, 328; his temple 15.309–10.

Ámmon (2) *a friend of Perseus* killed by Phineus 5.107–9.

Amphiaráüs *a Greek prophet, one of the Seven against Thebes, father of Alcmaeon, husband of Eriphyle* at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.316–17; his fate foretold by Themis 9.406–8.

Amphímedon *a Libyan* killed by Perseus 5.75–8.

Amphíon *king of Thebes, son of Jupiter and Antiope, husband of Niobe* his lyre a source of pleasure to Niobe 6.152, 178; his suicide 6.271–2; mourned 6.402; his city's change of fortune 15.427.

Amphíssus *son of Apollo and Dryope* suckles his mother in vain as she becomes a tree 9.356.

Amphýtrion *king of Thebes, husband of Alcmena and putative father of Hercules* 6.112, 9.140.

Amphrýsia *a place in southern Italy* 15.703.

Amphrýsus *a river in Thessaly* 1.580, 7.229.

Ámpyx (1) *a follower of Phineus* turned to stone by Perseus 5.183–6.

Ámpyx (2) *one of the Lapiths* at the battle with the centaurs 12.450–51.

Amúlius *younger son of Proca, brother of Numitor* dethroned by Romulus after dethroning his own brother 14.772–3.
Amýclae *a town in Laconia, centre of the cult of Hyacinthus* 8.314.
Amýclas *founder of Amyclae, father of Hyacinthus* 10.162.
Ámycus *a centaur* in the battle with the Lapiths 12.245–57.
Amýmone *a spring at Argos* 2.240.
Amýntor *a king in Thessaly, father of Phoenix* hands over Crantor to Peleus as a token of peace 12.364.
Ánaphe *an island in the Cyclades, an ally of Minos* 7.461.
Anápis *a river in Sicily; its god* lover of Cyane 5.417.
Anaxárete *a beautiful Cypriot girl* loved in vain by Iphis (2) 14.698–760; changed into a statue 14.754–8.
Ancaéus *an Arcadian* at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.315; gored to death 8.391–402; his death 8.407, 519.
Anchíses *son of Capys, father of Aeneas* favoured by Venus 9.425; rescued from Troy by Aeneas 13.625–7; on Delos 13.640; given a staff by Anius 13.680; his grave 14.84; visited in Hades by Aeneas 14.105–20.
Andraémon (1) *husband of Dryope, father of Amphissus* his marriage 9.333; finds his wife changed 9.363–91.
Andraémon (2) *an Aetolian king* 13.357.
Andrógeos *son of Minos, murdered at Athens* 7.457–9, 8.58–9.
Andrómeda *daughter of Cepheus and Cassiopeia* rescued and married by Perseus 4.671–761, 5.15; supports her husband 5.152–4.
Ándros (1) *an island in the Cyclades, named after Andros (2)* 7.469; 13.648, 661.
Ándros (2) *ruler of Andros (1), son of Anius* rules as Anius' regent 13.646–7; given prophetic powers by Apollo 13.650; surrenders his sisters to Agamemnon 13.661–4.
anémone *the flower which sprang up from the blood of Adonis* 10.734–8.
Anígrus *a river in Elis* 15.281–4.
Ánio *a river in Latium* 14.329.
Ánius *king and priest of Apollo on Delos, father of Andros* welcomes Aeneas 13.632–79; tells of his daughters pursued by Agamemnon on account of the powers given to them by Bacchus 13.651–74; his daughters changed into doves 13.673.
Antaéus *a giant in Libya who challenged passing strangers to wrestle with him and was invincible while he remained in contact with Mother Earth* killed by Hercules 9.183–4.
Antándros *a town on the coast of the Troad* 13.628.
Anténor *one of the Trojan elders* moved to return Helen 13.202.

Anthédon *a town in Boeotia* 7.232, 13.905.
Antígone *daughter of Laömedon* changed into a white-feathered stork by Juno 6.93–5.
Antíope *mother of Amphion* raped by Jupiter 6.111.
Antíphates *king of the cannibal Laestrygonians* attacks Ulysses and his men 14.233–40, 249; his kingdom 15.717.
Antíssa *a town on Lesbos* 15.287.
Ántium *a town in Latium* 15.719.
Antony *Marcus Antonius (83–31 BC), Roman leader, defeated by Octavian at the battle of Actium* 15.826.
Anúbis *an Egyptian god* 9.690.
Ápennines *a mountain range in Italy* 2.226, 15.431.
Apetown *see* **Pithecusae**.
Áphareus *a centaur* overcome by Theseus 12.341–5.
Aphídas *a centaur* killed by the Lapiths 12.316–26.
Apídanus *a river in Thessaly* 1.580, 7.229.
Ápis *an Egyptian god* 9.691.
Apóllo [also known as **Phoébus**] *god of music, poetry and medicine, son of Jupiter and Lutona, brother of Diana, father of Aesculapius and Phaëthon (as a sun-god, often confused with the Sun, son of Hyperion, particularly in relation to the Phaëthon story)* kills the Python and establishes the Pythian games 1.441–50; pursues Daphne 1.451–567; his affair with Coronis 2.543–7; takes revenge on Coronis 2.598–632; changes raven from white to black 2.631–2; as a herdsman 2.676–85; god of the oracle at Delphi 3.8–18, 130; as the shining Sun 3.151, 4.348; Narcissus compared with 3.421; worshipped in Egypt in the form of a crow 5.329; portrayed seducing Isse 6.122–4; takes revenge against Niobe and her sons 6.205–66; changes Cephisus' grandson into a sea-calf 7.389; rests his lyre at Alcathoë 8.15–16; Minos compared with 8.31; guides Mopsus' spear towards the Calydonian boar 8.350–52; rapes Dryope 9.331–2; father of Miletus 9.444; loves Cyparissus 10.107–8; turns Cyparissus into a cypress tree 10.132–42; love affair with Hyacinthus 10.162–216; worshipped by Orpheus 11.8; helps Orpheus 11.58; pipe competition with Pan 11.155–76; with Neptune builds Troy's walls for Laömedon 11.194–204; his seduction of Chione 11.303–17; changes Daedalion into a hawk 11.340–43; his temple at Claros 11.413; ensures Achilles' death 12.586–606, 13.501; his sacred cities 13.174–5; Cassandra his priestess 13.410; worshipped on Delos, Anius his priest 13.630–33; grants Andros powers of prophecy 13.650; his oracle on Delos 13.677–9; fails to seduce the Sibyl, grants her eternal life but not perpetual youth

14.133–51; as god of the (Pythian) games 14.720; advises the Romans to seek the aid of Aesculapius 15.630–40; his temple at Antium 15.722; his temple at Rome 15.865; *see also* **Sun.**

Apúlia *a region in southern Italy* 14.513.

Áquilo *the north wind* 1.263, 328; 5.285.

Arabia 10.478.

Aráchne *a Lydian maiden gifted at weaving, daughter of Idmon* challenged to a weaving contest by Minerva in disguise 6.5–145; changed into a spider 6.140–45.

Arcádia *a country in the centre of the Peloponnese* 1.216–17, 689; 2.405; home of the boar of Erymanthus, conquered by Hercules 9.192; 15.275, 331.

Árcas *son of Jupiter and Callisto* his birth 2.469; nearly kills his mother while hunting 2.496–507; changed into a constellation by Jupiter 2.505–7.

Árdea *a Rutulian city; the bird, a heron, that rose from its ashes* 14.573–80.

Arethúsa *a spring on Sicily, originally a nymph from Elis, follower of Diana* close to Cyane's home 5.409; tells Ceres of Proserpina's abduction 5.487–508; loved by Alpheüs 5.572–643; turned into a fountain in Sicily 6.632–6.

Árgive *adj. 'from Argos': following Homer, often used to refer to all the Greeks at Troy* 13.13, 14.562.

Árgo *Jason's ship on his quest for the Golden Fleece* 8.303.

Árgonauts [also known as **Minyae**] *the band of heroes who sailed in the Argo with Jason from Greece to Colchis in search of the Golden Fleece* 6.720–21, 7.1–8, 13.24; fear the Symplegades 15.337.

Árgos (adj. Argive) *the capital city of Argolis in the Peloponnese* 1.601; 2.240; 3.560; 4.609; 6.414; 8.268; 9.313; 14.477; 15.19, 163, 276.

Árgus *a monster with a hundred eyes, son of Arestor* placed as guard for Io by Juno 1.624–88; killed by Mercury 1.714–21; eyes set into the feathers of Juno's peacocks 1.722–3, 2.533.

Ariádne *daughter of Minos* helps Theseus against the Minotaur, is abandoned by him on Naxos and her crown is changed by Bacchus into a constellation 8.173–82.

Arícia (adj. Aricine) *a town and lake in Latium (modern Ariccia)* 14.331–2, 15.487.

Arménia 15.86.

Árne *an ally of Minos* changed into a jackdaw for her treachery against Siphnos 7.466–8.

Ásbolus *a centaur and prophet* at the battle with the Lapiths 12.306–9.

Ascálaphus *son of Acheron and Orphne* sees Proserpina eat the fateful pomegranate seeds 5.539–51; changed into a screech-owl 5.545–8.

Ascánius [also known as **Iulus**] *son of Aeneas and Creüsa* rescued by Aeneas 13.626–7; given gifts by Anius 13.680; first ruler of Alba 14.609; *see also* **Iulus**.

Asia 5.649, 9.448, 13.484.

Assýria 15.393.

Astérië *sister of Latona* raped by Jupiter in the form of an eagle 6.108.

Astýages *a companion of Phineus* turned to stone by Perseus using the head of Medusa 5.203–6.

Astýanax *son of Hector and Andromache* his death 13.415–17.

Astypalaéa *an island in the Sporades (north of Crete), an ally of Minos* 7.461.

Atalánta (1) *daughter of Iasos (or Iasion) of Nonacris* at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.317–27; first to draw blood from the boar 8.380–87, 426–30.

Atalánta (2) *daughter of the Boeotian king Schoeneus, famed for her beauty and speed* 10.560–704; changed into a lion 10.698–704.

Áthamas *king of Orchomenus in Boeotia, husband of Ino, son of Aeolus, brother of Sisyphus, father of Phrixus, Helle, Learchus and Melicertes* reproaches Pentheus 3.565; Ino proud of their marriage 4.420; subject of Juno's anger 4.467–72; driven mad by the Furies, smashes Learchus' skull against a stone floor 4.489–519; father of Palaemon (born as Melicertes) 13.919.

Athéna *see* **Minerva**.

Áthens [also known as **Mopsopia, heights of Cecrops**] *a city in Attica* 2.794–5; 5.645–52; 6.421–50, 676; 7.399, 430–31, 452–516, 723; 8.262–6; 15.427–9.

Áthis *an Indian youth* killed by Perseus 5.48–73.

Áthos *a mountain in Macedonia* 2.217, 11.554.

Átlas *a mythical king, son of Iapetus and Clymene, father of the Pleiads; a mountain in northern Africa, personified as a giant who held up the sky* 2.296–7; refuses hospitality to Perseus 4.628–62; changed into a mountain by Perseus 4.657–62, 772–3; 6.175; 9.273; 15.149.

Átreus *king of Mycenae, son of Pelos, father of Agamemnon* 15.855.

Áttis *a favourite of Cybele* changed into a pine 10.104–5.

Augéan stables *the stables of Augeas, king of Elis, not cleaned for thirty years* as one of his twelve labours, cleaned by Hercules, who diverted the rivers Alpheüs and Peneüs through them 9.187.

Augústus *C. Julius Caesar Octavianus (63 BC–AD 14), great-nephew*

of Julius Caesar, who defeated Mark Antony at the battle of Actium in 31 BC, was given the title Augustus and ruled as first Roman emperor (27 BC–AD 14) his people's loyalty 1.205; gates to his palace 1.562; as successor of Julius Caesar 15.751, 851–2; as a blessing to mankind 15.758–9; his military exploits and conquests 15.820–31; his rule 15.832–6, 860; his apotheosis 15.837–8, 868–70.

Aúlis *a harbour in Boeotia* 12.10; 13.182, 195.

Auróra *goddess of the morning, daughter of the Titan Pallas, mother of Memnon* 2.112, 144; 5.440; abducts Cephalus, whom she makes doubt the faithfulness of his wife, Procris 7.702–22, 835; 9.93, 421–2, 795; mourns Memnon 13.576–622, 15.190–91.

Ausónia *a country in southern Italy, often representing Italy as a whole* 5.350; 14.320–21, 773, 785; *see also* **Italy**.

Aúster *the south wind* 1.65–6.

Autólycus *son of Mercury and Chione, famed for his cunning* married to Mestra 8.738; his birth 11.312–15.

Autónoë *a bacchanal, daughter of Cadmus, mother of Actaeon, aunt of Pentheus* 3.720.

Aventínus *a king of Alba, who gave his name to a hill in Rome* 14.620–21.

Avérnus *a lake in Campania in Italy, said to be the entrance to Hades; sometimes used to refer to the underworld itself* 5.540, 10.52, 14.119; *see also* **Hades**.

Bábylon *a city in Asia* 4.57.

bácchanal, bacchant(e) *(usually female) worshipper of Bacchus.*

Bácchus (adj. bacchic) [also known as **Dionysus, Liber**] *god of wine and revelry, child of Semele by Jupiter* as an infant 3.310–17; Narcissus compared with 3.421; takes revenge on Pentheus 3.518–701; scorned by the daughters of Minyas 4.1–30, 389–418; epithets 4.12–16; Juno considers his revenge on Pentheus as an example 4.428; Ino calls in vain for his protection 4.523; rejected by Acrisius 4.604–14; in goat form 5.329; seduces Erigone 6.125; festival in his honour 6.587–600; watches Medea, gains youth for his nurses 7.294–6; changes a bullock into a stag 7.359–60; changes Ariadne's crown into a constellation 8.176–9; worshipped in Calydon 8.275; worshipped by Thracian maenads 9.641; punishes the maenads 11.67–84; gift to Midas 11.85–145; offered wine 13.639; grants powers to Anius' daughters 13.650; changes Anius' daughters into doves 13.668–72; offered the goat in sacrifice 14.114–15; given India's lynxes 15.413.

Bálearic Islands *islands east of Spain, famous for their slingsmen* 2.727–9, 7.710.

Báttus *an old herdsman in Pylos* sees Apollo's cattle stolen 2.687–707; shown to be a liar, changed into flint by Mercury 2.705–7.

Baúcis *wife of Philemon* entertains Jupiter and Mercury 8.632–724; changed into a tree 8.714–20.

Béroë *Semele's nurse* Juno adopts her form 3.277–86.

Biënor *a centaur* killed by Theseus 12.346–50.

Boeótia (adj. Boeotian) *a country in central Greece* 1.313; 2.239; 3.13, 339; 7.763; 10.588; 11.300; 12.10; 13.682, 905.

Boötes *a constellation* 2.176–7, 8.207, 10.447.

Bóreas *the north wind* 1.64, 6.682–713, 7.3; abducts Orithyia, sister of Procris 7.694–5, 15.471.

Britons *the people of the British Isles, visited by Julius Caesar in 55/54 BC* 15.752.

Bubássus *a town in Caria, on the south-western corner of modern Turkey* 9.643.

Bubástis *an Egyptian god* 9.691.

Busíris *an Egyptian king who killed and ate strangers* killed by Hercules during one of his twelve labours 9.182–3.

Bútes *one of the Athenian envoys to Aegina (2)* 7.500, 665–71, 681–4.

Buthrótum *a town on the coast of Epirus, opposite Corcyra* 13.720–21.

Býblis *daughter of Miletus and Cyaneë, grandchild of Apollo and twin sister of Caunus* incestuous passion for her brother 9.452–666; changed into a mountain spring 9.663–4.

Cádmus *husband of Harmonia, son of Agenor, father of Agave and Autonoë* slays the dragon and founds Thebes 3.3–130; remonstrates with Pentheus 3.564; wanders in exile with Harmonia 4.563–603; changed into a snake 4.576–89.

Caéneus *a young man from Thessaly, born as a girl (Caenis)* at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.305; his fame 12.172–81; raped by Neptune, then changed from female to male and given invulnerability 12.189–209; at the battle between the centaurs and the Lapiths, eventually killed by being choked under the weight of the forest 12.459–531; changed into a bird 12.524–5.

Caénis *see* **Caeneus.**

Caésar *see* **Julius Caesar, Augustus.**

Caïcus *a river in Mysia* 2.243, 12.111–12, 15.278.

Caiéta *Aeneas' nurse; a place in Italy, her burial site, which took her name* 14.158, 441–3; 15.717–18.

Cálaïs *one of the Argonauts, one of the winged twin sons of Boreas and Orithyia* 6.716, 7.3.
Calaúrea *an island off the south coast of Argolis, sacred to Leto* 7.384–5.
Cálchas *Greek prophet and priest, son of Thestor* prophesies the fall of Troy 12.18–29.
Callíope *a Muse, mother of Orpheus* sings in contest with the daughters of Pierus 5.337–40, 662; called on by Orpheus 10.148.
Callírhoë *second wife of Alcmaeon, daughter of Acheloüs* seeks revenge for the death of Alcmaeon, asks Jupiter to advance her children's adulthood 9.413–17, 431–2.
Callísto *an Arcadian nymph, favourite of Diana* 2.409–530; changed into a bear by Juno 2.477–84; changed into a constellation by Jupiter 2.505–7.
Cálydon (adj. Calydonian) *a city on the river Euenus* 6.415–16; the boar hunt 8.270–546, 728; 9.147.
Calýmne *an island in the eastern Aegean Sea* 8.222.
Cánace *daughter of Aeolus* raped by Neptune 6.116.
Cánens *daughter of Janus and Venilia* loved by Picus 14.333–434; leaves home in grief and vanishes 14.417–34.
Canópus *a city in Egypt at the west of the mouth of the Nile* 15.828.
Cápaneus *Greek hero, one of the so-called Seven against Thebes* 9.404–5.
Cápetus *an Alban king* 14.612.
Caphéreus *a notoriously dangerous promontory on the coast of Euboea* 14.472–81.
Cápitol *a hill in Rome, site of the temple of Jupiter* 1.561; 2.539; 15.589, 828, 842.
Cápri *an island in the bay of Naples* 15.709.
Cápys *an Alban king* 14.612–13.
Cária *a country in south-western Asia Minor* 4.297, 9.644–5.
Cárpathos *an island in the eastern Aegean Sea* 11.249.
Carthaéa *a town on Ceos* 7.368.
Cassándra *Trojan prophetess, daughter of Priam and Hecuba* dragged off by the Greeks at the fall of Troy 13.410–11; raped by the lesser Ajax 14.468.
Cassiopeía *wife of Cepheus, mother of Andromeda* claimed herself to be more beautiful than Nereus' daughters 4.671–705; delighted at Andromeda's release 4.735–8; supports Perseus 5.152–4.
Cástor *twin brother of Pollux, son of Jupiter and Leda* at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.301–3, 372–7; renowned for his horsemanship 12.400.

Cástrum [Castrum Inui ('Inuüs' camp')] *a Rutulian city (in Latium)* 15.727.
Caúcasus *a mountain range in Asia* 2.224, 5.87, 8.797–8.
Caúlon *a city in Bruttium in southern Italy* 15.705.
Caúnus *son of Miletus and Cyaneë, grandson of Maeander, twin brother of Byblis* object of his sister's incestuous desire 9.453–634.
Caÿster *a Lydian river, famous for its swans* 2.252, 5.387–91.
Cébren *a river-god, father of Hesperia* 11.768–71.
Cécrops *founder of Athens, father of Herse, Pandrosos and Aglauros* 2.555; his city 6.70, 15.427.
Céladon *a Lapith* killed in the battle with the centaurs 12.250–53.
Celénnia *a promontory in southern Italy* 15.704.
Cenaéum *a promontory in the north-west of Euboea* 9.137.
Cenchréïs *wife of Cinyras (2)* takes part in the festival of Ceres 10.435–7.
céntaurs *half-man, half-horse creatures dwelling in the mountains of Thessaly* overcome by Hercules 9.191, 15.282; the battle with the Lapiths 12.210–541, 14.670; *see also* **Chiron, Nessus.**
Céos *an island in the Cyclades* 7.368, 10.120.
Céphalus *an Athenian prince, husband of Procris* his marriage 6.681; seeks help for Athens from Aegina (2) 7.493–516, 8.4; his tragic marriage with Procris 7.665–865; his spear 7.672–93.
Cépheus *king of Ethiopia, brother of Phineus, husband of Cassiopeia, father of Andromeda* offers Andromeda's hand in marriage 4.669–705; delighted at Andromeda's release 4.735–8; reaction to Phineus' outburst at Andromeda's wedding-feast 5.8–45; supports Perseus 5.152–4.
Cephísus *a river in Phocis and its god, father of Narcissus* 1.369–70, 3.19; rapes Liriope 3.342–4; mourns the fate of his grandson 7.388–9, 438.
Cerámbus *a survivor of Deucalion's flood* changed into a wood-beetle by the nymphs 7.353–6.
Cerástae *a people on Cyprus* offend against Venus 10.222–37; changed into bulls by Venus 10.237.
Cérberus *the three-headed dog guarding the entrance to the underworld* 4.450–51, 501; described 7.408–18; 9.185; 10.20–22, 64–7.
Cercópians *a people originally from Lydia* changed into apes 14.91–100.
Cércyon *a brigand at Eleusis who wrestled with and killed passing travellers* killed by Theseus 7.439.
Céres [also known as **Mother Earth**] *goddess of agriculture, daughter of Saturn and Rhea, mother of Proserpina* searches for Proserpina 5.341–661; raped by Neptune 6.118–19; protectress of Eleusis

7.439; worshipped in Calydon 8.274; revenge for her grove desecrated by Erysichthon 8.741–816; laments Iasion's old age 9.422; her annual festival 10.431–5; grain her gift and offering 11.122, 13.639; *see also* **Earth**.

Céÿx *king of Trachis, son of Lucifer, husband of Alcyone, brother of Daedalion* supplicated by Peleus 11.266–90; relates story of Daedalion 11.291–346; learns of and prepares to attack the monster wolf 11.351–91; his fatal voyage to Claros 11.410–572; longed for by Alcyone 11.573–81; Morpheus adopts his form 11.652–73; lamented by Alcyone 11.680–713; his corpse returns to Alcyone 11.715–28; changed into a kingfisher 11.739–44.

Chaönia *a district in north-western Epirus* 13.717.

Cháos *a shapeless mass such as that out of which the universe was made; also used as another name for Hades* 14.404.

Charáxus *a Lapith* killed in the battle with the centaurs 12.272–88.

Charíclo *nymph, mother of Ocyrhoë* 2.636–7.

Cháron *ferryman who carries souls across the Styx to the underworld* 10.73.

Charýbdis *a dangerous whirlpool, lying between Italy and Sicily, opposite Scylla* 7.63–4, 8.121, 13.730–32, 14.76.

Chimaéra *fire-breathing Lycian monster with the head of a lion, middle of a goat, tail of a snake* 6.339, 9.647.

Chíone *daughter of Daedalion* seduced by Mercury and Apollo, destroyed by Diana 11.301–27.

Chíos *an island in the Aegean Sea, on the Ionian coast* 3.598.

Chíron *a centaur, son of Saturn, foster-father of Aesculapius, father of Ocyrhoë* 2.630–77, 6.126, 7.352.

Cícones *a Thracian people* 6.710, 10.3; responsible for Orpheus' death 11.3–43; 15.313–14, 513.

Cimmérians *a cave-dwelling people* 11.592.

Cimólus *an island in the Cyclades* 7.463–4.

Cínyps (adj. Cinyphian) *a river in Africa* 15.755.

Cínyras (1) *an Assyrian king whose daughters were changed into marble* 6.98–100.

Cínyras (2) *a king on Cyprus, son of Pygmalion and father of Myrrha* object of his daughter's incestuous infatuation 10.298–475, 712, 730.

Cípus *a Roman general* horns appear on his head, refuses to be king 15.565–621.

Círce *a sea-nymph, daughter of the Sun and Perse, famous for her beauty and magic* her mother and the Sun 4.205; visited by Glaucus 13.967; falls in love with him 14.9–39; vents her frustration on

Scylla, changes her into a monster surrounded by barking dogs 14.40–71; confrontation with Ulysses after turning his men into pigs 14.247–307; her treatment of Picus and Canens 14.308–434; tells Ulysses of his future voyage 14.435–9; avoided by Aeneas 14.447; her country 15.719.

Cithaéron *a mountain in Boeotia* 2.223, 3.702.

Cláros *a city in Ionia* 1.516; site of a famous temple of Apollo 11.413.

Cleopátra *queen of Egypt, lover of Antony* 15.826.

Clítor *a town in Arcadia* 15.322–8.

Clýmene *mother of Phaëthon* asked by Phaëthon to prove his divine lineage 1.756–76; reaction to Phaëthon's questions about his father 2.37–43; in grief at Phaëthon's death 2.333–9; in grief at the fate of her daughters 2.355–61; ignored by the Sun 4.204.

Clýtië *daughter of Ocean* loves the Sun 4.206–8, 234–70; changed into a heliotrope 4.266–70.

Clýtus *one of Cephalus' companions* 7.499–500, 681.

Cnídos *a city in Caria* 10.531.

Cnóssos *a city on Crete, residence of Minos* 8.43, 144; 9.669–70.

Cócalus *a Sicilian king* welcomes Daedalus 8.261.

Colchis (adj. Colchian) *a country in Asia, east of the Black Sea* 7.101–46, 275, 300; 13.24.

Cómbe *an Aetolian, daughter of Ophius* attacked by her own children 7.382–3.

Cométes *a Lapith* killed at the battle with the centaurs 12.284.

Corcýra *an island off the north-western coast of Greece (modern Corfu)* 13.719.

Córinth [also known as **Ephyre**] *a city on the Isthmus* 2.240; 5.406–7; 6.416–17; 7.392, 409, 507.

Coróne *daughter of Coroneus (king of Phocis)* pursued in vain by Neptune 2.569–90; changed into a crow by Minerva 2.580–87.

Corónis *a princess from Larissa, mother of Aesculapius* loved by Apollo 2.542–7, 598–632; killed by Apollo 2.603–11.

Córythus *a young Lapith* 12.291–2.

Cos *an island in the Aegean Sea, off the coast of Caria* its women changed into cows 7.363–4.

Crágus *a mountain in Lycia* 9.646.

Crántor *Peleus' armour-bearer* 12.361–6.

Cráthis *a river in Bruttium in southern Italy* 15.315–18.

Crenaéus *a centaur* killed in the battle with the Lapiths 12.312–15.

Crete (adj. Cretan) *a Mediterranean island* 3.1; 7.434, 455–90; 8.21–185; home of a bull captured by Hercules as one of his labours 9.186, 667–797; 10.2; 13.358, 705–7; 15.540.

Crímese *a town in Lucania in southern Italy* 15.51.
Crócus *a young man* changed into a flower after falling in love with Smilax 4.283.
Crómyon *a village near Corinth* home of a boar killed by Theseus 7.435–6.
Cróton (1) *a man from southern Italy who entertained Hercules* 15.9, 15–17.
Cróton (2) *a city in the extreme south of Italy, founded by Myscelus, where Croton (1) was buried* 15.8–18, 55–60.
crow warns the raven to keep his own counsel 2.547–52; punished by Minerva 2.557–65; Corone's transformation into the crow 2.569–90.
Ctéatus *son of Actor* 8.308.
Ctesýlla *daughter of Alcidamas* changed into a dove 7.369–70.
Cúmae *a city on the coast of Italy, home of the Sibyl* 14.102–56, 15.712.
Cupid *god of love, son of Venus* causes Apollo to fall in love with Daphne 1.453–73; Hermaphroditus compared with 4.321; sent by Venus to cause Pluto to fall in love with Proserpina 5.364–84; praised by Byblis 9.482–3, 543–4; denies responsibility for Myrrha's passion 10.310–11; Adonis compared with 10.515–17; scratches his mother with one of his arrows 10.524–6.
Cúres *a Sabine city* 15.7.
Cýane *a Sicilian nymph* protests at Pluto's abduction of Proserpina 5.409–37; changed into the spring that bears her name 5.429–37; unable to tell Ceres verbally of Proserpina's abduction 5.464–70.
Cyáneë *daughter of Maeander, mother of Byblis and Caunus* 9.450.
Cýbele *mother of the gods* the pine her sacred tree 10.104; her temple profaned by Hippomenes 10.686–704; rescues Aeneas' ships in anger at Turnus' impiety 14.535–56.
Cýclades *an archipelago in the Aegean Sea* 2.264.
Cýclop(e)s *a race of giants dwelling on the coast of Sicily, each having only one eye; they forge Jupiter's thunderbolts* 1.259, 3.305; Polyphemus and Galatea 13.744; 14.2, 175, 187; 15.93; *see also* **Polyphemus**.
Cýcnus (1) *a king of Liguria, son of Sthenelus, friend of Phaëthon* laments Phaëthon 2.367–80; changed into a swan 2.373–7, 12.581–2.
Cýcnus (2) *a hunter, son of Apollo and Hyrië* changed into a swan 7.372–81.
Cýcnus (3) *a Trojan hero, son of Neptune* duels with Achilles 12.71–145; changed into a swan by Neptune 12.145; lamented by Neptune 12.580–82.

Cýllarus *a centaur* loved by Hylonome 12.393–428.
Cylléne *the birthplace of Mercury, a mountain in Arcadia* 1.217, 713; 5.607; 7.386; 11.304.
Cýnthus *a mountain on Delos* 2.221, 6.204, 15.537.
Cyparíssus *a youth from Carthaea* devoted to a sacred stag which he accidentally kills 10.106–42; changed into a cypress tree by Apollo 10.136–40.
Cýprus (adj. Cypriot) [also known as **Paphos**] *an island off the coast of Asia Minor* 10.239, 270, 644, 718; 14.696.
Cythéra *an island in the Aegean Sea, associated with Venus, who is said to have sprung from the sea near to it* 10.530, 15.803.
Cýthnos *an island in the Cyclades* 5.252, 7.464.
Cytórus *a mountain in Paphlagonia* 6.132.

Daedálion *son of Lucifer, brother of Ceÿx, father of Chione* warlike father of a beautiful daughter 11.291–300; mourns Chione 11.329–45; changed into a hawk by Apollo 11.340–45.
Daédalus *Athenian architect* builder of the labyrinth at Minos' command 8.159–68; flight with Icarus 8.183–240; his jealousy of Perdix 8.241–60; builder of Pasiphaës bull 9.739–44.
Damasíchthon *one of Niobe's seven sons* his death 6.254–65.
Dánaäns *another name for the Greeks (especially those in the Trojan War)* 12.68.
Dánaë *mother of Perseus* raped by Jupiter in the form of a shower of gold 4.611, 6.113, 11.117.
Dánaüs, daughters of [also known as **Danaïds**] *punished in Hades for murdering their husbands* 4.462–3, stop at Orpheus' music 10.44.
Dáphne *daughter of Peneüs* loved by Apollo 1.451–567; changed into a laurel tree by her father 1.547–52.
Dáphnis *a shepherd* turned to stone 4.277.
Dardánian *see* **Trojan.**
Daúnus *a king of Apulia* his daughter married by Diomedes (2) 14.459–63, 510–11.
Dawn *personified see* **Aurora.**
Deïaníra *daughter of Oeneus, sister of Meleäger* spared the punishment of Meleäger's other sisters 8.544; fought over by Acheloüs and Hercules 9.9–12; as Hercules' wife 9.103–58.
Deïone *mother of Miletus* 9.443.
Délos [also known as **Ortygia**] *an island in the Cyclades, birthplace of and sacred to Apollo and Diana* 3.597; 6.190–91, 250–51, 333–8; 8.221; 9.332; 13.631–705; 15.540.

Délphi *a city in Phocis, famed for its oracle of Apollo* 1.515; 3.8; 4.643; 9.332; 10.168; 11.304, 414; 15.144, 630–31.

Demóleon *a centaur* in the battle with the Lapiths 12.355–77.

Deucálion *son of Prometheus, husband of Pyrrha* survivor of the great flood 1.319–415; changed into stone 1.401–10; the flood 7.356.

Diána [also known as **Phoébe**] *virgin goddess of hunting, daughter of Jupiter and Latona, sister of Apollo* Daphne compared with 1.476, 487; model for Syrinx 1.694–8; cherishes Callisto 2.415–16; casts aside her former favourite, Callisto 2.441–65; changes Actaeon into a stag after being seen naked by him while bathing 3.156–205; pleased at Actaeon's death 3.251–2; rejected by Salmacis 4.304; worshipped in Egypt in the form of a cat 5.330; rejected by Venus 5.375; protects Arethusa 5.618–22, 639–41; incited to revenge against Niobe by Latona 6.205–18; wrath directed at Calydon 6.416; patroness of Procris 7.745–55; sends the Calydonian boar 8.271–83; deflects spear from the Calydonian boar 8.353–4; challenged by Ancaeus 8.394–5; changes Meleäger's sisters into guinea-fowl 8.543; her dress 9.90; her sacred deer with golden horns, captured by Hercules as one of his twelve labours 9.188; Venus imitates her appearance 10.537; offended by Chione 11.322–5; demands the sacrifice of Iphigenia 12.28–36, 13.185; her sacred pool in Aricia 14.331; her worship disturbed 15.490; watches over Hippolytus 15.535–46; changes Egeria into a spring 15.549–51. *Also goddess of the* **Moon**, *as the sister of Apollo in his guise as the Sun.*

Díctys (1) *one of the Etruscan sailors* 3.615–16.

Díctys (2) *a centaur* at the battle with the Lapiths 12.335–40.

Dído *the Phoenician queen of Carthage* welcomes and falls in love with Aeneas, commits suicide 14.78–81.

Dídyme *an island in the Aegean Sea* 7.469.

Diomédes (1) *a king in Thrace* killed together with his man-eating horses by Hercules as one of his twelve labours 9.194–6.

Diomédes (2) *a Greek hero at Troy, son of Tydeus* does not claim Achilles' arms 12.622; witness to Nestor's desertion by Ulysses 13.67; constant companion of Ulysses 13.100–102, 351; joins Ulysses on a night-time raid 13.239–54; loses his companions, unable to help Turnus 14.457–513; wounds Venus 15.769; his sword escaped by Aeneas 15.807.

Dionýsus (adj. Dionysiac) *see* **Bacchus**.

Dis *see* **Pluto**.

Dodóna *a city in Epirus, the site of the oracle of Jupiter, the oldest in Greece* 7.623, 10.90, 13.716, 15.311–12.

Dólon *a Trojan spy* captured by Ulysses and Diomedes on their nighttime raid 13.98, 244–6, 254.

Dóris *a sea-goddess, daughter of Ocean and Tethys, wife of Nereus, mother of fifty daughters (the Nereïds)* 2.11, 268; mother of Galatea 13.742.

Dórylas (1) *a fabulously wealthy Libyan* 5.129–34.

Dórylas (2) *a centaur* at the battle with the Lapiths 12.378–92.

dríads *wood-nymphs* 3.507, 6.452; demand Erysichthon's punishment 8.746–79; mourn Orpheus 11.48–9, 14.326.

Drías *son of Mars, brother of Tereus* at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.307; at the battle between the Lapiths and the centaurs 12.290–99, 311–12.

Dríope *daughter of Eurytus* raped by Apollo and gives birth to Amphissus, but is subsequently taken as wife by Andraemon 9.331–93; changed into a tree 9.350–62.

Earth *Mother Earth personified* changes the blood of the giants into mankind 1.157–61; parched by the heat from Phoebus' chariot driven by Phaëthon 2.272–303; 7.196, 354; *see also* **Ceres**.

Ébro *a river in western Spain* 7.324.

Echémmon *one of Phineus' supporters* killed by Perseus 5.163–76.

Echídna *the half-woman half-snake mother of Cerberus, the Chimaera, the Hydra and the Sphinx* 4.501, 7.409.

Echíon (1) *one of the soldiers sprung from the teeth of the dragon slain by Cadmus, husband of Agave, father of Pentheus* one of the five to survive 3.126–8; builder of a temple to Cybele 10.687.

Echíon (2) *son of Mercury* at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.311, 345–6.

Écho *a nymph* loves Narcissus in vain 3.356–61, 369–403; deceives Juno, cursed by the goddess 3.358–69; wastes away, changed into stone 3.395–9; laments Narcissus' demise 3.493–507.

Eëtion *king of Thebae, father of Andromache* 12.110.

Egéria *a nymph, wife of Numa* her lament for Numa at his death 15.482–91, 547–51; confronted by Hippolytus 15.492–546; changed into a spring 15.548–51.

Egypt *the land in Africa, sometimes representing Africa as a whole* 5.324, 9.694, 15.826.

Élatus *father of Caenis/Caeneus* 12.189.

Eleúsis *a town and district in Attica, home of a cult of Ceres* 7.439.

Élis *a country and city in the west of the Peloponnese* 5.497, 577, 608; 8.308; 12.550; 14.325.

Elpénor *one of Ulysses' companions* 14.252.

Elýsian Fields *the abode of the blessed in the underworld* 11.62.

Emáthia *a district in Macedonia* 5.313.
Enaésimus *son of Hippocoön* killed by the Calydonian boar 8.362–4.
Enípeus *a river in Thessaly* 1.580, 6.117–18, 7.229.
Envy *personified* 2.760–832, 6.129–30, 10.515.
Épaphus *son of Io* 1.748–56.
Éphyre *see* **Corinth.**
Epidaúrus *a city in Argolis, on the eastern coast of the Peloponnese* 7.436, 15.643.
Epimétheus *brother of Prometheus, father of Pyrrha* 1.390–91.
Epírus *a country in the north of Greece* 1.227, 8.283, 13.720.
Épytus *a king of Alba* 14.612.
Erasínus *a river in Argolis* 15.276.
Érebus *see* **Hades.**
Eréchtheus *king of Athens, son of Pandion, father of Procris and Orithyia* his family 6.676–701; brings Cephalus and Procris together 7.697–8.
Erichthónius *son of Vulcan* his birth 2.553–62, 757; his rejuvenation sought by Vulcan 9.423.
Erídanus [also known as **Padus**] *the river Po* where Phaëthon's corpse lands 2.323–4, 365–6, 371–2.
Erígone *daughter of Icarus (2); a constellation in the Zodiac (Virgo)* raped by Bacchus 6.125; her piety 10.451.
Erymánthus (adj. Erymanthian) *a mountain and river in Arcadia* 2.244, 499; 5.608; home of a boar, conquered by Hercules as one of his twelve labours 9.192.
Erysíchthon *a Thessalian, son of King Triopas* offends Ceres and is punished with insatiable hunger 8.739–884.
Érytus *one of Phineus' companions* killed by Perseus 5.79–85.
Éryx (1) *a mountain in western Sicily, sacred to Venus* 2.221, 5.364.
Éryx (2) *son of Venus* 14.83.
Éryx (3) *opponent of Perseus* turned to stone by Perseus using the head of Medusa 5.195–9.
Ethiópia *a country in Africa* 1.778, 2.235, 4.669, 15.320.
Étna *a volcano on Sicily* 2.220; 5.352–3, 441; 13.770, 869, 877; 14.2, 161, 187; 15.340.
Etrúria (adj. Etruscan) *a country on the western side of Italy to the north of and bordering Latium* 14.453; 15.559, 576.
Etrúscan Sea [also known as the **Tuscan Sea**] *the Mediterranean Sea to the west of southern Italy* 14.8, 224.
Euágrus *a Lapith* at the battle with the centaurs 12.290–96.
Euboéa *an island off the eastern coast of mainland Greece* 7.232; 9.218–29; 12.24; 13.660, 905; 14.1, 155.

Euíppe *wife of Pierus* 5.303–5.
Eumélus *father of Botres, whom he killed after he showed disrespect for Apollo* grieves for his son, who was changed into a bird, the bee-eater, by Apollo 7.390.
Euménides, the *see* **Furies.**
Eumólpus *a bard who brought the mysteries of Ceres to Eleusis* 11.94.
Euphórbus *son of Panthoüs* reincarnated as Pythagoras 15.161–4.
Európa *daughter of Agenor* loved by Jupiter 2.844–75, 6.103–7; mother of Minos by Jupiter 8.120–23; her beauty 8.49–50.
Eurótas *a river in Laconia* 2.247, 10.169.
Eúrus *the east wind* 1.61, 7.659, 8.2, 11.481.
Eurýdice *wife of Orpheus* dies when bitten by an adder, trapped in Hades because Orpheus looked back when rescuing her 10.1–64; reunited with Orpheus 11.63–6.
Eurýlochus *one of Ulysses' companions* chosen by lot to visit Circe's palace 14.252; alone of Ulysses' companions escapes Circe's magic 14.287–90.
Eurýnome *mother of Leucothoë (1)* 4.210–19.
Eurýpylus (1) *king of Cos* 7.363–4.
Eurýpylus (2) *a Thessalian hero* 13.357.
Eurýstheus *king of Mycenae, son of Sthenelus* Hercules' hatred for him 9.203; his hatred for Hercules' children 9.273–5.
Eúrytus (1) *son of Actor* 8.308.
Eúrytus (2) *a centaur* his behaviour the cause of the battle between the Lapiths and centaurs 12.220–40.
Evánder *king of Pallanteum* offers help to Aeneas 14.456.
Evénus *an Aetolian river, near Calydon* 8.527, 9.104.
Exádius *a Lapith* at the battle with the centaurs 12.265–9.

Fárfa a tributary of the Tiber 14.330–31.
Fates, the *the three goddesses who allot each person an unalterable fate* 1.256, 5.534; curse Meleäger at his birth 8.452–6, 14.152, 15.781–809.
fauns *rustic semi-gods with horns* 1.193, 6.392.
Faúnus (1) *an Italian god identified with Pan, father of Acis* 6.330, 13.750–52.
Faúnus (2) *king of Latium, father of Latinus (1)* 14.450.
Fórmiae *a town on the coast of Latium* 15.717.
Fórum *the market-place which formed the civic, economic and religious heart of Rome* 15.842.
Furies, the [also known as **the Eumenides** (a euphemism meaning 'kindly ones')] *goddesses of vengeance, three sisters (Allecto,*

Tisiphone and Megaera) 1.241, 725; 4.452–6, 469–511; present at Procne's wedding 6.430–31; called on by Althaea 8.481–2; 9.410; 10.46, 312–13, 349–51.

Galánthis *Alcmena's servant* helps Alcmena in her labour 9.306–23; changed into a weasel 9.318–21; her change lamented by Alcmena 9.326–7.

Galatéa *a sea-nymph, daughter of Doris and Nereus* loves Acis, rejects Polyphemus' advances 13.738–898; changes Acis into a river 13.885–97.

Gánymede *son of Laömedon* abducted by Jupiter in the form of an eagle to serve as his cup-bearer 10.155–61, 11.756.

Gargáphië *a valley, home to a grotto where Diana bathed* 3.155–62.

Géryon *a monster in western Spain who had three bodies* killed by Hercules as one of his labours 9.184, 15.13–14.

Giants *monsters, said to have made war on the gods* 1.152–62; their blood changed into human form 1.160, 5.319, 10.150, 14.2–3.

Glaúcus *a fisherman from Anthedon* changed into a sea-god 7.233; loves Scylla in vain 13.904–67; rejects Circe, mourns Scylla 14.1–68.

Golden Age 1.89–112.

Golden Fleece *the goal of Jason's quest with the Argonauts* 6.721, 7.150.

Górge *daughter of Oeneus, sister of Meleäger* remains unchanged 8.543.

Górgons *the three daughters of Phorcys, of whom the best known is* **Medusa**.

Graces *the three beautiful daughters of Jupiter and Eurynome* 6.429.

Gradívus *see* **Mars**.

Grýneus *a centaur* in the battle with the Lapiths 12.258–70.

Gýaros *an island in the Cyclades* 5.252, 7.470.

Hádes [also known as **Tartarus, Elysian Fields, Erebus, Chaos, Avernus**] *the underworld, Pluto's kingdom* 1.113, 662; 2.261; 3.504; 4.432–80; 5.371, 423, 543; 6.675; 9.407; 10.14–63; 11.62, 670; 12.257, 523, 619; 13.25–6; 14.112, 404–5, 591; 15.533.

Haemónia *see* **Thessaly**.

Haémus *brother of Rhodope, changed into a mountain in Thrace for calling himself Jupiter* 2.219, 6.87–9, 10.77.

Harmónia *wife of Cadmus* 3.132–3; wanders in exile with Cadmus 4.568–603; changed into a snake 4.600.

Hárpies, the *half-bird half-woman monsters* 7.4, 13.710.

Hébe [also known as **youth**] *goddess of youth, daughter of Juno* entreated by Medea for Aeson's rejuvenation 7.241–2; grants youth to Iolaüs 9.400–416.

Hébrus *a river in Thrace* 11.51–4.

Hécate *goddess of enchantments, sister of Latona* her altar used by Medea 7.74, 241; prayed to by Circe 14.405.

Héctor *bravest of the Trojans in the Trojan War, son of Priam and Hecuba* his lineage 11.758, 60–61; mourns Aesacus 12.3; his courage 12.67–9; his duel with Achilles 12.75–6; Nestor equal to in battle 12.446–8; praised by Nestor 12.547; his corpse 12.591; mourned 12.607; his attempt to burn the Greek fleet 13.8; his bravery and duel with Ajax (1) 13.82–90; killed by Achilles 13.177–8; his duel with Ajax (1) 13.275–9, 384; mourned by Hecuba 13.422–8; guarantees Hecuba's fate 13.487; model of courage 13.663.

Hécuba *daughter of Dymas, wife of Priam, mother of Hector* 11.761; mourns Hector 13.422–8; her sufferings 13.429–576; mourns her children 13.494–543; her revenge on Polymestor and its consequences 13.544–76; changed into a barking dog 13.567–9; mourned 13.620–21.

Hélen *'the face that launched a thousand ships', daughter of Jupiter and Leda, wife of Menelaüs, stolen by Paris and thus the cause of the Trojan War* 12.5, 13.200–201, 14.669; laments her old age 15.232–3.

Hélenus *a Trojan prophet, son of Priam* captured by Ulysses 13.98, 333–6; prophesies for Aeneas 13.720–22, 15.437–51.

Héliades *daughters of the Sun and Clymene, sisters of Phaëthon* mourn their brother 2.340–66; changed into poplars 2.345–54.

Hélice *a port in Achaea* 15.293.

Hélicon *a mountain in Boeotia, where the Muses dwelt* 2.219; 5.254, 663–4.

Hélops *a centaur* killed in the battle with the Lapiths 12.335–6.

Hénna *a town in central Sicily* 5.385.

Herculáneum *a town on the bay of Naples* 15.711.

Hércules *the mythical hero, son of Jupiter and Alcmena, husband of Deïanira (later, when deified, husband of Hebe)* returns from his attack on Troy 7.364; drags Cerberus from Hades 7.410–11; competes with Acheloüs for the hand of Deïanira 9.13–88; kills Nessus over Deïanira 9.101–33; his death and apotheosis 9.134–272; his labours 9.182–99; his birth 9.284–316; seeks rejuvenation for Iolaüs 9.401; rescues Hesione, attacks Troy 11.212–15; hated by Nestor 12.539–77; leader of an attack on Troy 13.23–4; gives Philoctetes his arrows 13.401; his stay with Croton (1) 15.9; foretells

the foundation of Croton (2) 15.12–18; helps Myscelus 15.39–47; Milo's former strength compared with 15.230; deals with the centaurs 15.283.

Hermaphrodítus *son of Mercury and Venus* desired by Salmacis 4.288–388; joined with Salmacis 4.373–4.

Hérse *daughter of Cecrops* entrusted with the box containing Erichthonius 2.558–9; loved by Mercury 2.724–51; envied by Aglauros 2.803–4.

Hersílië *wife of Romulus* mourns the loss of her husband 14.829–51; lifted into heaven 14.847–51.

Hesíone *daughter of Laömedon* rescued from a sea-monster by Hercules 11.211–13.

Hespéria *a nymph, daughter of Cebren* chased by Aesacus, dies when bitten by an adder 11.769–77.

Hespérides, the *('the daughters of the west') three nymphs who guarded the golden apples on an island to the west of Atlas* 9.190, 11.114.

Hippálmus at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.360–62.

Híppasus (1) *son of Eurytus* at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.313, 371.

Híppasus (2) *a centaur* at the battle with the Lapiths 12.352.

Híppe *the new name given to Ocyrhoë* 2.675.

Hippódamas *father of Perimele* kills his daughter 8.593–4.

Hippodamía *daughter of Adrastus* married to Pirithoüs, their wedding-feast disrupted by the battle with the centaurs 12.211–25; her beauty the cause of the battle 14.670.

Hippólyta *queen of the Amazons* defeated by Hercules, who stole her golden belt as one of his twelve labours 9.189.

Hippólytus [also known as **Virbius**] *son of Theseus and Hippolyta* tries to comfort Egeria with the story of his fate, after being falsely accused of an affair with Phaedra 15.492–546; identified with a local deity called Virbius 15.544; amazed at Egeria's transformation 15.552.

Hippómenes *son of Megareus* wins Atalanta's hand by beating her in a race 10.575–680; angers Venus, intrudes on Cybele's shrine 10.681–97; changed into a lion by Cybele 10.698–704.

Hippóthoüs at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.307.

Hodítes *a centaur* killed in the battle with the Lapiths 12.456–8.

Hunger *personified* punishes Erysichthon 8.784–822.

Hyacínthus *a beautiful youth from Amyclae in Sparta* loved by Apollo 10.162–219; changed into a flower by Apollo 10.206–16; his connection with Ajax (1) 13.395–8.

Hýad(e)s *the daughters of Atlas, sisters of the Pleiads; a group of seven stars in the constellation Taurus* 3.595; depicted on Achilles' shield 13.293.

Hýdra *a monstrous seven-headed snake from Lerna* Hercules poisons Chiron with its venom 2.652; destroyed by Hercules (as one of his twelve labours) 9.69–74, 192–3; its venom 9.158.
Hýleus at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.312.
Hylónome *a female centaur* lover of Cyllarus 12.404–28.
Hýmen *god of marriage* at Perseus' wedding 4.759; absent from the wedding of Tereus and Procne 6.429; at Iphis (1) and Ianthe's wedding 9.762–5, 796; at Orpheus' wedding 10.1–6.
Hyméttus *a mountain in Attica* 7.701–2, 10.285.
Hypaépa *a small town in Lydia* 6.13, 11.152.
Hýpanis *a river in Sarmatia (southern Russia)* 15.285–6.
Hypérion *see* **Sun**.
Hypsípyle *ruler of Lemnos, daughter of Thoäs* 13.399.
Hýrië *mother of Cycnus (2); a town and lake in Aetolia named after her* 7.371; dissolves in her own tears, changed into a lake 7.380–81.

Iálysos *a town on the island of Rhodes* 7.365–7.
Iánthe *a beautiful Cretan girl* loved by Iphis (1) 9.714–97.
Íapyx (adj. Iapýgian) *a king in Apulia, son of Daedalus; his country was named Iapygia after him* 14.459; 15.52, 703.
Iásion *son of Jupiter and Electra, lover of Ceres* 9.422.
Icária *an island west of Samos* 8.235.
Icárian Sea *the sea between the Cyclades and south-west Asia Minor* 8.230.
Ícarus (1) *son of Daedalus* flies too close to the sun, drowns after falling when the wax in his wings melts 8.195–235.
Ícarus (2) *father of Erigone* changed into a constellation 10.450.
Ícelos *child of Sleep, able to adopt many forms* 11.639.
Ída *a mountain near Troy* 2.218; 4.277, 289–93; 7.359; 10.72; 11.762–3; 12.521; 13.325.
Ídas (1) *a companion of Perseus* killed by Phineus 5.90–96.
Ídas (2) *a companion of Diomedes* changed into a bird 14.504.
Ília *mother of Romulus* 14.781, 823.
Ilithýia *see* **Lucina**.
Ílium *see* **Troy**.
Illýria *a region in the Balkans, possibly modern Albania* 4.568.
Ínachus *a river in Argolis; its god, father of Io* laments for his daughter 1.583–7, 638–66.
Inárime *an island off the coast of Campania (central Italy)* 14.89.
Índia *a land in the east* 1.778, 5.48, 15.413.
Índiges *the name under which the deified Aeneas was worshipped* 14.607.

Índus *a river in India* 8.288.

Íno *wife of Athamas, daughter of Cadmus, sister of Semele, mother of Learchus and Melicertes* rears Bacchus in secret 3.313–14; takes part in Pentheus' murder 3.722; Juno's revenge on her and Athamas 4.417–542; changed into a sea-god (Leucothoë) by Neptune 4.539–42; grieved for by her followers 4.543–53.

Ínuüs *see* **Castrum**.

Ío *daughter of Inachus* raped by Jupiter 1.585–688; changed into a snow-white heifer 1.611; as a fugitive 1.725–47; changed back into human form 1.738–43, 2.524; worshipped as Isis 1.747, 9.686.

Ioláüs *nephew of Hercules* at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.310; restored to youth 9.397–415; fate permits his rejuvenation 9.430–31.

Iólcos *the town in Thessaly from which the Argonauts set sail* 7.158.

Íole *wife of Hyllus, daughter of Eurytus* rumours spread of Hercules' love for her 9.140–44; comforts Alcmena 9.276–81; tells Alcmena the story of Dryope and her role in it 9.325, 395.

Iónian Sea *the sea between Greece and Italy* 4.535, 562; 15.50, 700.

Iphigenía *daughter of Agamemnon* the virgin sacrifice needed to enable the Greeks to set sail for Troy 12.28–34, 13.185–93.

Íphis (1) *born as the daughter of Ligdus* brought up as a boy, loved by Ianthe 9.668–797; changed from female to male 9.786–91.

Íphis (2) *a Cypriot youth* loves Anaxarete in vain, commits suicide 14.698–753.

Íris *rainbow goddess, messenger of Juno* her part in the flood 1.270–71; purifies Juno 4.480; arranges for Alcyone to dream of her dead husband 11.585–632, 646–7; sets fire to the Trojan fleet 14.85; sent with Juno's message to Hersilië 14.830–45.

Iron Age 1.127–50.

Ísis *Egyptian goddess* 1.747; called on by Iphis (1) 9.686–701, 772–84; called on by Telethusa 9.772–82.

Isménus (1) *a river near Thebes* 2.243, 6.159.

Isménus (2) *son of Niobe* his death 6.224–9.

Ísse *daughter of Macareus (1)* raped by Apollo 6.124.

Ísthmus *the narrow strip of land at Corinth dividing the Peloponnese from the Greek mainland* 6.420, 7.405, 15.507.

Italy 13.708; 14.7, 17, 76–7; 15.11, 59, 291.

Íthaca (adj. Ithacan) *an island in the Ionian Sea, home of Ulysses* 13.107, 512, 711; 14.167–8, 228.

Ítys *son of Tereus and Procne* his birth 6.438; greets his mother 6.620–46; killed by his mother and her sister 6.641–4; called for by Tereus 6.652–8.

Iúlus [also known as **Ascanius**] *son of Aeneas, from whom the* gens Iulia *(of which Julius Caesar was a member) claimed descent* his adolescence 14.583; Julius Caesar his descendant 15.767; *see also* **Ascanius**.

Ixíon *king of the Lapiths, father of Pirithoüs and the centaurs, punished in Hades for attempting violence on Juno* his punishment 4.461, 9.123–4; his punishment interrupted by Orpheus' music 10.42–3; father of Pirithoüs 12.210; his bold desire to sleep with Juno 12.504–6.

Jánus *a god of transitions with two faces pointing in opposite directions* 14.334, 381, 785, 790–91.

Jáson *son of Aeson* captures the Golden Fleece with the aid of Medea 7.5–158; asks Medea to rejuvenate his father 7.164–78; at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.303, 347–9, 411–13.

Jove *see* **Jupiter**.

Júba *a king of Numidia* 15.755.

Július *C. Julius Caesar, Roman general and statesman (c. 101–44 BC), great-uncle and adoptive father of Augustus (Octavian)* his assassination 1.200–201; his deeds and achievements 15.746–60, 852; Venus attempts to prevent his violent death 15.761–80, 803–7; omens before his assassination 15.780–802; his apotheosis 15.760–61, 840–51.

Júno *vengeful queen of the gods, goddess of marriage, sister and wife of Jupiter, daughter of Saturn* tries to catch Jupiter with Io 1.601–25; sets Argus' hundred eyes into the feathers of her peacocks 1.722–6; her characteristic jealousy 2.435; takes revenge on Callisto 2.466–77; visits Tethys and Ocean 2.508–31; hatred for Tyre, taken out on Semele 3.255–95; enquires of Teiresias whether men or women enjoy sex more 3.319–35; curses Echo 3.362–8; takes revenge on Ino 4.421–80, 523–4; turns Ino's companions into stone 4.547–50; worshipped as a snow-white cow 5.330–31; revenge on a Pygmy queen and on Antigone 6.89–94; banishes Latona 6.332–8; absent from Procne's wedding 6.429; her anger at Aegina (2) 7.523; protectress of Samos 8.220; sets Hercules his twelve labours 9.15; her hatred for Hercules 9.135; begged by Hercules to grant him death 9.176–81; the twelve labours 9.198–9; assents to Hercules' admission as a god 9.259–61; ensures difficult childbirth for Alcmena 9.284, 295–6, 308; brother and sister as husband and wife 9.499; called on by Iphis (1) 9.762; at Iphis (1) and Ianthe's wedding 9.796; resents Ganymede 10.160; prayed to by Alcyone 11.578–89; her desire for Alcyone to know the truth 11.629; subject of Ixion's

desire 12.506; moved by Hecuba's suffering 13.574–5; instructs Iris 14.85; relents from her anger against Aeneas 14.582, 592; unlocks the gates of Rome to the men of Cures 14.782; tries to aid the Sabines 14.798; sends Iris to change Hersilië 14.830–39; her temple at Argos 15.163; the peacock her bird 15.385; her temple at Lacinium 15.702; opponent of Aeneas 15.773.

Júpiter [also known as **Jove**] *king of the gods, lord of the sky, brother and husband of Juno, brother of Neptune and Pluto, son of Saturn* his reign in the Silver Age, divides the year into seasons 1.113–18; destroys the giants 1.153–5; angry at Lycaön, summons council of the gods 1.163–274; rapes Io 1.588–600; gives Io to Juno 1.610–21; orders Mercury to kill Argus 1.668–70; placates Juno 1.731–7; unable to control the Sun's chariot 2.60–62; kills Phaëthon with a thunderbolt 2.304–13, 378–9, 396–7; heals creation after its scorching 2.401–10; seduces Callisto 2.422–38, 466; changes Callisto and Arcas into constellations 2.505–6; abducts Europa 2.836–73; father of Bacchus by Semele 3.261–313; enquires of Teiresias whether men or women enjoy sex more 3.318–38; affairs with nymphs 3.363–4; looked after by Celmis as a baby 4.281; father of Dionysus 4.610; father of Perseus, rapes Danaë in the form of a shower of gold 4.612, 697–8; 5.11–12; worshipped by Perseus 4.755–7; identified with Ammon (1) 5.327; sets out the conditions for Proserpina's rescue from Hades 5.512–33; his august image in Minerva's weaving 6.72–4; his seductions depicted by Arachne 6.103–14; ancestor of Niobe 6.176; destroys the Telchines 7.367; sacrificed to during the plague at Aegina (2) 7.587–601; grants a new population to Aegina (2), offered thanks 7.615–30, 652; compared with Cephalus as lover 7.801; passion for Europa 8.50; Crete as his birthplace 8.100; paternity of Minos denied 8.122–3; offered sacrifice by Minos 8.153; made welcome by Baucis and Philemon 8.626–708; as Hercules' father 9.14, 23, 289; his temple at Cenaeum 9.137; has Hercules admitted as a god 9.242–72; cursed for not helping Alcmena 9.302; as the only one who can overcome Capaneus 9.405; causes Callirhoës sons to become full-grown men 9.413–17; settles a dispute over rejuvenation 9.427–41; together with Juno as example of a brother and sister as husband and wife 9.499; rape of Ganymede 10.148–61; worshipped with human sacrifices 10.224–8; his altar at Troy 11.198; his desire for Thetis 11.220–27; worshipped by the Greeks at Aulis before the Trojan campaign 12.12–14; ancestor of Ajax 13.27–8; aids the Trojan attack on the Greeks' ships 13.92; ancestor of Ulysses 13.142–5; sends dream to Agamemnon 13.216–18; Priam's blood on his altar

13.409–10; entreated by Aurora for Memnon 13.586–600; compared to Polyphemus 13.842–4; scorned by Polyphemus 13.857; entreated by Venus for Aeneas' deification, assents 14.585–95; entreated by Mars for Romulus' deification, assents 14.807–16; the thunderer 15.70; his oracle at Dodona 15.311; the eagle that bears his thunderbolts 15.386; grants divine status to Julius Caesar 15.808–43; enthroned as ruler in heaven 15.858–9; prayed to for Augustus' long life before deification 15.866.

Kneeler *a constellation* 1.182.
Kneelers, the *three goddesses, guardians of women in labour* 9.294.

lábyrinth *a secure maze designed by Daedalus, built at Minos' command to house his monster son, the Minotaur* 8.158–74.
Lacínium *a promontory in Bruttium (southern Italy) near Croton* 15.14, 701–2.
Lacónia *see* **Sparta**.
Laërtes *son of Arcesius, father of Ulysses* at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.315; his lineage 13.144.
Láïus *father of Oedipus* 7.759.
Lampátië *sister of Phaëthon, one of the Heliades* 2.348.
Laömedon *king of Troy, father of Priam* helped by Apollo and Neptune to build the walls of Troy but refuses them payment 11.196–210; his lineage 11.755–7.
Lápiths *a people in Thessaly* 12.210–536, 14.670.
Latínus (1) *king of Laurentium, son of Faunus (2), father of Lavinia* 14.450.
Latínus (2) *king of Alba* 14.610–11.
Látium *the region of central Italy in which Rome is located* 14.390, 422, 453, 608, 623, 832; 15.480–86, 582, 626, 742.
Latóna [Greek **Leto**] *daughter of the Titan Coeus, mother of Apollo and Diana* Manto her prophet 6.161–4; envied and insulted by Niobe 6.185–214, 274–99; anger against Lycians 6.313–70; Calaurea dear to her 7.384; gives birth on Delos 13.634–5.
Látreus *a centaur* in the battle with the Lapiths 12.462–93.
Lauréntum (adj. Laurêntian, Laúrentine) *a district in Latium* 14.336–42, 598.
Lavínia *daughter of Latinus (1)* pledged to Aeneas as wife 14.569–70.
Lavínium *a city in Latium built by Aeneas* 15.728.
Leärchus *son of Athamas and Ino* killed by his father 4.516–19.
Léda *wife of Tyndareus, raped by Jupiter in the form of a swan, mother to Castor and Pollux* depicted on Arachne's weaving 6.109.

Léleges *the people of Megara* 7.443, 9.645.
Lélex *a Greek hero from Locris* at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.312; at Acheloüs' banquet 8.567–8; tells of his visit to Phrygia 8.617–23; relates story of Philemon and Baucis 8.624–725.
Lémnos *an island in the Aegean Sea, loved by Vulcan* 13.46, 314, 399.
Lérna *a marsh in Argolis, home of the Hydra* 1.598, 9.69.
Lésbos *an island in the Aegean Sea* 2.592, 7.358, 11.55, 13.174.
Lethaéa *wife of Olenus* changed into stone 10.69–72.
Léthe *a river in the underworld; its waters said to bring forgetfulness* 7.152, 11.603.
Léto *see* **Latona.**
Leúcas *an island in the Ionian Sea off the coast of Acarnania* 15.289–90.
Leucíppus at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.306.
Leucósia *an island near Paestum (a town in Lucania on the bay of Salerno)* 15.707.
Leucóthoë (1) *daughter of Orchamus and Eurynome* loved by the Sun 4.196–255; changed into a frankincense shrub 4.252–5.
Leucóthoë (2) *a sea-goddess* the new name for Ino.
Líber *see* **Bacchus.**
Líbya *used to refer to Africa in general* 2.237; 4.617; 5.75, 129, 328; 7.272; *see also* **Africa.**
Líchas *servant of Hercules* takes the shirt of Nessus to Hercules as a gift from Deïanira 9.155–7; caught by Hercules 9.211–29; changed into stone 9.219–25.
Lígdus *husband of Telethusa, father of Iphis (1)* desires a son 9.670–708, 757, 780.
Ligúria *a region in northern Italy* 2.370–71.
Lilybaéum *a promontory on the south coast of Sicily* 5.351, 13.725–6.
Límyre *a town in Lycia* 9.646.
Líriope *a water-nymph, mother of Narcissus* raped by Cephisus 3.341–7.
Litérnum *a town in Campania (central Italy)* 15.713–14.
Lívia *wife of Augustus (58 BC–AD 29)* 15.836.
Lócri *a place in Bruttium (southern Italy)* 15.705.
Lócris (adj. Locrian) *a region in central Greece between Aetolia and Phocis.*
Lótis *a nymph, daughter of Neptune* pursued by Priapus, changes into a lotus 9.347–8.
Love *personified* 10.26–30; *see also* **Venus.**
Lúcifer *the morning star, father of Ceÿx* 2.114, 722; 4.629, 664; 8.1–2; 11.271, 346, 570–72; 15.190, 789.

Lucína [also known as **Ilithyia**] *goddess of childbirth* called on by Euippe 5.304; at Iole's labour 9.283; prevents Alcmena giving birth but is tricked by Galanthis into allowing it 9.294–318; delivers Myrrha of Adonis 10.507–11.

Lýcabas (1) *one of Acoetes' crew* leads a mutiny 3.623–9; changed into a dolphin by Bacchus 3.673–5.

Lýcabas (2) *one of Perseus' companions* 5.60.

Lýcabas (3) *a centaur* at the battle with the Lapiths 12.302.

Lycaéus *a mountain in Arcadia* 1.217, 699.

Lycáön *king of Arcadia, father of Callisto* offends the gods 1.164; his offence and punishment 1.198–200, 208–40; changed into a wolf 1.233–9; terrifies Callisto 2.495–6.

Lycéüm *a gymnasium in Athens, famous for being where Aristotle taught* 2.710.

Lýcia *a country in Asia Minor* 4.296, 6.318–81; peasants changed into frogs by Latona 6.370–81, 395; 9.645; 13.256.

Lycúrgus *a king in Thrace* opposes Bacchus 4.23–4.

Lýcus (1) *a centaur* at the battle with the Lapiths 12.332.

Lýcus (2) *a companion of Diomedes* 14.503.

Lýcus (3) *a river, tributary of the Maeander* 15.273–4.

Lýdia [also known as **Maeonia**] *a country in Asia Minor* 2.252; 3.583; 4.423; 6.12, 146, 149; 11.99.

Lyncéstis *a region in Macedonia* 15.329–31.

Lýnceus *son of Aphareus* 8.304.

Lýncus *king of Scythia* changed into a lynx by Ceres after attacking Triptolemus 5.650.

Lyrnéssus *a town near Troy* 12.107–8, 13.175–6.

Mácareus (1) *a man from Lesbos, father of Isse* 6.124.

Mácareus (2) *a Lapith* in the battle with the centaurs 12.452.

Mácareus (3) *companion of Ulysses* reunited with Achaemenides 14.158–65; recounts his adventures 14.221–319, 435–41.

Maeánder *a river in Phrygia and Lydia, famed for its winding course; its god* 2.246, 8.162, 9.450.

maénads [also known as **bacchanals**] *worshippers of Bacchus* rouse Pentheus' anger, turn on him 3.706; their rites 9.641–2; kill Orpheus 11.3–43; their punishment 11.67–84.

Maénalus *a mountain in Arcadia, sacred to Pan* 1.216–17; 2.415, 442; 5.608.

Maeónia *see* **Lydia**.

Maéra *an otherwise unknown woman in the Troad* changed into a dog 7.362.

Magnésia *a region in Thessaly* 11.408–9.
Maía *mother of Mercury* 1.669.
Mánto *prophetess daughter of Teiresias* 6.157–63.
Márathon *a coastal town in Attica, site of a famous Persian defeat in 490 BC* 7.433–4.
Mareótis *a lake and city in Egypt* 9.773.
Mars [also known as **Gradivus**] *god of war, son of Jupiter and Juno* his affair with Venus 4.172–4, 182–7; 14.28; ancestor of Tereus 6.427; his sacred field in Colchis 7.101; ancestor of Meleäger 8.437; his armour 12.91; changes Romulus into a god 14.806–24; father of Quirinus 15.863.
Mársyas *a satyr* challenges and loses to Apollo in a piping contest, is flayed alive 6.384–400; tears of those who mourned him turned into a spring from which comes the river that bears his name 6.392–400.
Medéa *enchantress daughter of Aeëtes* loves Jason, aids him to get the Golden Fleece 7.9–158; rejuvenates Aeson 7.159–296; kills Pelias 7.297–349; her flight 7.250–403; marries Aegeus 7.402–3; tries to kill Theseus 7.404–24.
Medúsa *the most famous of the Gorgons, daughter of Phorcys, mother of Pegasus* her head as Perseus' weapon 4.616; 5.180, 230, 241–9; her head changes seaweed into coral 4.741–5; killed by Perseus 4.771–803; raped by Neptune, her hair changed into snakes 4.781, 6.119; Medusa as the mother of Pegasus 5.257–9, 10.21–3.
Mégara (adj. Megarian) *a town on the Greek mainland between Athens and Corinth* 7.443, 8.6.
Mégareus *king of Onchestus, father of Hippomenes* 10.605.
Melámpus *a priest and prophet* cures the daughters of Proetus 15.325–8.
Melántho *daughter of Deucalion* raped by Neptune in the form of a dolphin 6.120.
Meleäger *son of Oeneus and Althaea* gathers men to hunt the Calydonian boar 8.299, 385–7; kills his uncles and suffers revenge at the hands of Althaea 8.414–525; remembered by his sister Deïanira 9.149.
Meleäger, sisters of mourn their brother 8.533–46; changed into guinea-fowl 8.543–6.
Melicértes *son of Athamas and Ino* changed into the sea-god Palaemon 4.522.
Mémnon *son of Aurora* killed by Achilles, mourned by his mother 13.578–99; his ashes changed into birds 13.600–618.
Memnónides *birds* made from the ashes of Memnon by Jupiter 13.604–19.

Memory *see* **Mnemosyne.**

Meneláüs *a Greek hero at Troy, king of Sparta, husband of Helen, younger son of Atreus, brother of Agamemnon* dares not claim Achilles' shield 12.623; the Greek fleet gathers to back him at Aulis 13.181–95; present at the contest for Achilles' arms 13.204; Ajax's equal in battle 13.359; kills Euphorbus 15.162; Paris stolen from his grasp 15.806.

Menéphron *an Arcadian man* commits incest 7.386–7.

Menoétes *a Lycian* killed by Achilles 11.116–27.

Ménthe *a nymph* changed into mint 10.729.

Mércury *messenger god (particularly for Jupiter), son of Jupiter and Maia* ordered to kill Argus 1.669–89; kills Argus 1.713–19; discovers and punishes Battus' lies 2.685–751; visits Athens, attempts to seduce Herse, obstructed by Aglauros 2.708–52, 815–35; drives cattle to shore of Sidon at Jupiter's request 2.836–45; affair with Venus 4.288; worshipped by Perseus 4.754–6; his sword used to kill Echemmon 5.176; worshipped as an ibis 5.331; made welcome by Baucis and Philemon 8.627–38; rapes Chione 11.303–12; as ancestor of Ulysses 13.146; aids Ulysses against Circe 14.291–3.

Mérmerus *a centaur* wounded in the battle with the Lapiths 12.303–5.

Mérops *king of Ethiopia, husband of Clymene* putative father of Phaëthon 1.763–4, 2.184.

Messána *a town on the coast of Sicily opposite the Italian mainland* 13.729; 14.5, 17, 47; 15.290–92.

Messápian fields *part of Calabria (southern Italy)* 14.514.

Messéne *a city in the Peloponnese* 6.417, 12.549.

Méstra *daughter of Erysichthon, wife of Autolycus* given power by Neptune to change her shape 8.738, 847–78.

Methóne *a hill near Troezen said to have been formed when the winds tried to escape from underground and caused a bubble* 15.305–6.

Methýmna *a city on Lesbos* 11.55.

Mídas *son of Cybele* rewarded by Bacchus with the 'Midas touch' for reuniting him with Silenus 11.93–145; supports Pan in the music contest with Apollo 11.146–93; given donkey's ears 11.175–9.

Milétus (1) *son of Apollo and Deïone, father of Caunus and Byblis* flees from Minos 9.443–50.

Milétus (2) *a city on the coast of Caria, founded by Miletus (1)* 9.449.

Minérva [also known as **Pallas Athena**] *goddess of wisdom and skill, also goddess of war, daughter of Jupiter, from whose head she sprang fully formed* hides Erichthonius 2.553–63; protectress of Athens 2.709–14, 835; 5.645; takes revenge on Aglauros, visits cave of Envy 2.749–88; patron of Cadmus 3.101–3; rescues Echion

and four other companions of Cadmus 3.127; worshipped by the daughters of Minyas 4.38; worshipped by Perseus 4.754–6; her shrine and aegis 4.798–803; protects Perseus 5.46–7; at work in the riot at Perseus' wedding-feast 5.155; visits the Muses 5.250–336; rejection of Venus 5.375; engages in a weaving contest with Arachne 6.1–140; the olive tree sacred to her 6.335; changes Perdix into a partridge 8.251–2; worshipped at Athens 8.264–6; worshipped by Oeneus 8.275; worshipped by Achilles 12.150–51; her image stolen by Ulysses 13.99, 337, 345, 381; her shrine 14.468; rescues Diomedes (2) 14.475–6; her promontory off the coast of Campania (central Italy) 15.709.

Mínos *husband of Pasiphaë, son of Europa and Jupiter, father of Androgeos and Ariadne* threatens war against Athens 7.455–504; rejects Scylla's love 8.6–151; confines the Minotaur in the labyrinth 8.152–71; no longer paid tribute by Athens 8.263; Jupiter cannot grant him immortality 9.437–46.

Mínotaur *half-man half-bull monster son of Minos and Pasiphaë* hybrid son of a bestial relationship 8.133, 155–6; confined in the labyrinth, killed by Theseus 8.157–74.

Mintúrnae *a city on the southern border of Latium* 15.716.

Mínyae *the* **Argonauts**, *so-called because some claimed descent from Minyas.*

Mínyas, daughters of *(Minyas was the king and founder of Orchomenus in Boeotia) Leuconoë, Arsippe and Alcithoë, followers of Minerva* reject Bacchus 4.1–4, 32–54, 388–415; changed into bats by Bacchus 4.407–13, 425.

Mithridátes *a king of Pontus, conquered by the Romans in 63* BC 15.755–6.

Mnemósyne [also known as **Memory**] *mother of the Muses* raped by Jupiter in the form of a shepherd 6.114.

móly *a magic herb* 14.291–3.

Mónychus *a centaur* in the battle with the Lapiths 12.498–511.

Moon *sometimes identified with Diana as the sister of Apollo (in his guise as the Sun)* 1.11; 2.205–208, 723; 7.206.

Mopsópia *see* **Athens**.

Mópsus *a Lapith prophet, son of Ampyx (2)* at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.316–17, 350–53; in the battle with the centaurs 12.455–8; recognizes Caeneus as a bird 12.524–32.

Mórpheus *son of Somnus* imitates Ceÿx 11.635–73.

Múnichus, sons of *(Munichus was the king of the Molossians in Epirus)* changed into birds together with their father 13.718–19.

Múses, the *patrons of the arts, the nine daughters of Jupiter and*

Mnemosyne 2.219; visited by Minerva 5.254–340; victors in the contest with the daughters of Pierus 5.662–70; 10.148; 14.433; 15.482, 622.

Mútina *a city in Cisalpine Gaul (northern Italy), now Modena* 15.822–3.

Mýcale *a Thessalian witch, mother of Orios* said to have charmed the moon with incantations 12.263–4.

Mycénae *a city in Argolis of which Agamemnon was king* 6.414; 15.426, 428.

Mýconos *an island in the Cyclades* 7.463.

Mýrmidons repopulate Aegina (2) 7.623–58; ants changed into Aeacus' new subjects 7.635–42.

Mýrrha *daughter of Cinyras (2), mother of Adonis* her incestuous desire for her father 10.309–502; changed into the myrrh tree 10.490–500; her love to be avenged 10.524.

Mýscelus *an Argive, founder of Croton (2), son of Alemon* 15.19–57.

Mýsia *a country in Asia Minor* 15.277–8.

naíads *water-nymphs* 1.641, 690; 2.325; 3.505; 4.49, 289, 304; 6.330, 452; some changed by Diana into the Hedgehog Isles 8.580–89; 9.87; grant Byblis a stream for her tears 9.657–8; 10.9, 514; mourn Orpheus 11.48–9; 14.328; help to obstruct Sabine attack on Rome 14.785.

Naples *a town on the coast of Campania (central Italy)* 14.101, 15.711.

Nar *a river in Umbria (to the north of Latium)* 14.330.

Narcíssus *son of Liriope and Cephisus* his birth and Teiresias' prophecy 3.345–50; his rejection of Echo and others 3.351–406; falls in love with his own reflection, dies 3.407–509; changed into a flower 3.510.

Nárycum (adj. Narýcian) *a town in Locris* 8.312, 14.468.

Nature *personified* 8.81, 615; 9.757–8; 10.330; 15.252–3, 270.

Náxos *the largest island in the Cyclades* 3.636–49, 690; 8.175.

Néleus *king of Pylos, son of Neptune and Tyro, father of Nestor* Battus his servant 2.690; all but one of his twelve sons killed by Hercules 12.552–77.

Neméa (adj. Nemean) *a town in Argolis, home to a famous lion killed by Hercules as one of his twelve labours* 9.197, 235–6.

Némesis *goddess of retribution, punisher of pride and arrogance among mortals* retribution against Narcissus 3.406; to be feared 14.694.

Neoptólemus [also known as **Pyrrhus**] *son of Achilles* proposed recipient of his father's arms 13.155; deputed to sacrifice Polyxena 13.455–6; sacrifices Polyxena 13.475–6.

Neptune *king of the sea, brother of Jupiter and Pluto* floods the earth 1.275–90; causes the waters to subside 1.330–34; scorched by the sun 2.270–71, 292; pursues Corone 2.574; turns Ino and her child into sea-gods 4.532–42; rapes Medusa 4.797; in Minerva's weaving 6.75; his affairs depicted in Arachne's weaving 6.115–20; changes Perimele into an island 8.596–610; changes Mestra to rescue her from her father 8.854–70; ancestor of Hippomenes 10.606; takes revenge on Laömedon 11.202–10; builder of Troy 12.25–6; father of Cycnus (3) 12.72; changes Cycnus (3) into a swan 12.144–5; rapes Caenis and changes her into a man, granting her invulnerability 12.192–207; his anger against Achilles 12.580–97; father of Polyphemus 13.854.

Néreïds *sea-nymphs, the fifty daughters of Nereus and Doris* 1.301; 5.17; 11.380, 392; subject to Neptune 12.93–4; protect Galatea 13.743, 898; 14.264.

Nerétum *a town in Calabria (southern Italy)* 15.50.

Néreus *sea-god, husband of Doris, father of the Nereïds* scorched by the Sun 2.268–9; father of Thetis 11.219–28, 258; his shrine 11.361–2; subject to Neptune 12.94; father of Galatea 13.742.

Néritos *an island near Ithaca* 13.712.

Néssus *a centaur* his passion for Deïanira 9.101–33; the shirt stained with his blood 9.153–4; at the battle with the Lapiths 12.307–9, 454.

Néstor *king of Pylos, famed for his oratory, wisdom and great age* at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.313, 365–8; recalls the story of Caeneus 12.169–88; at the wedding of Pirithoüs and Hippodamia, witness to the battle of the centaurs and the Lapiths 12.213, 327, 429–48; his hatred for Hercules 12.536–78; deserted by Ulysses 13.63–72; his great age 15.837.

Night *personified* 8.82, 14.404.

Nile *the river in Egypt; its god* 1.422, 728; 2.254; 5.144, 188, 324; 9.774; 15.753.

Níobe *wife of Amphion, mother of seven sons and seven daughters* incurs the anger of Latona 6.148–312; changed into stone 6.303–9.

Nísus *king of Megara, father of Scylla* his kingdom magically protected by his crimson lock 8.7–10; in personal command of his city's defence 8.70–72; his lock cut off by Scylla 8.84–6; changed into a falcon, swoops at Scylla 8.145–7.

Nónacris (adj. Nonácrian) *a mountain and city in Arcadia, home of Atalanta (1)* 1.690, 8.427.

Nóricum *a mountainous country north of the Adriatic, roughly equivalent to modern Austria* 14.712.

Nótus *the south wind* 1.264.

Núma *Numa Pompilius, second king of Rome, husband of Egeria* seeks out Croton (2) and its history 15.3–11; dies at a great age 15.479–86.

Numícius *a river in Latium* 14.329, 598–9.

Numídia (adj. Numidian) *a region in north Africa, its people conquered by Julius Caesar in 46 BC* 15.754.

Númitor *a king of Alba* deposed by Amulius (his brother) and restored by Romulus and Remus 14.773.

Nýcteus *a king in Boeotia* 14.505.

Nyctímene *daughter of Epopeus (the king of Lesbos), who forced her into incest* changed into an owl by Minerva 2.591.

Ocean *the encircling sea; its god, husband of Tethys* 2.510; 7.266; 9.499, 594; 13.292; purifies Glaucus 13.950–65, 15.13.

Octávian *see* **Augustus.**

Ocýrhoë *prophetess daughter of Chiron and Chariclo* reveals the secrets of fate 2.635–58; changed into a mare 2.658–75.

Oechália *a city in Euboea* sacked by Hercules 9.136, 331.

Oédipus *king of Thebes, son of Laius* defeats the Sphinx 7.759–60; his city ruined 15.429.

Oéneus *king of Calydon, husband of Althaea, father of Meleäger, Deïanira and their sisters* gives thanks for a year of plenty but neglects Diana 8.273–5; rejoices at his son's victory 8.486–7; asked for his daughter's hand in marriage 9.11–12.

Oenópia *former name of* **Aegina** (1).

Oéta *a mountain range between Thessaly and Aetolia* 2.217; 9.165, 205, 230, 249.

Ólenus *husband of Lethaea* changed into a stone 10.70–71.

Olíaros *an island in the Cyclades* 7.469.

Olympics *the festival of athletics and arts held every four years at Elis* 14.325.

Olýmpus *the home of the gods, a mountain in the north of Thessaly* 1.154, 212; 2.60, 225, 848; 7.225; 13.761; 15.780.

Onchéstus *a city in Boeotia* 10.605.

Onétor *Peleus' herdsman* 11.348–78.

Ophiúcus *a constellation* 8.182.

Óphius *father of Combe* 7.382.

Ops *wife and sister of Saturn* 9.498.

Órchamus *king of Persia, father of Leucothoë (1)* his lineage 4.212; punishes his daughter 4.237–40.

Oríon *a hunter; a constellation* 8.207; depicted on Achilles' shield 13.294.

Oríon, daughters of their funeral procession 13.692–6; the Coroni spring from their ashes 13.697–9.
Oríos *a Lapith* killed in the battle with the centaurs 12.262–4.
Orithýia *daughter of Erechtheus, sister of Procris* carried off by Boreas 6.681–714, 7.694–5.
Órpheus *a Thracian musician and bard, husband of Eurydice, son of Apollo and Calliope* fails to retrieve his wife from Hades 10.3–85; his song 10.143–738; killed by the Thracian women 11.4–66; instructs Midas in Dionysus' rites 11.92.
Órphne *an underworld nymph, mother of Ascalaphus* 5.540–41.
Ortýgia (1) *a part of Syracuse, located on an island between the city's two harbours* 5.640.
Ortýgia (2) (adj. Ortygian) *an early name for Delos* 15.536.
Osíris *Egyptian god, husband of Isis* 9.693.
Óssa *a mountain in Thessaly* 1.155, 2.225, 7.224.
Óthrys *a mountain in Thessaly* 2.221; 7.225, 353; 12.173, 513.

Pachýnus *a promontory in the south-east of Sicily* 5.351, 13.725.
Pactólus *a river in Lydia* 6.16; 11.87–8, 137–41.
Pádus (adj. Eridanus) *the river Po* 2.258.
Paeónia *a country in Macedonia* 5.303, 314.
Págasae *a port in Thessaly where the Argo was built* 12.412.
Palaémon *a sea-god, born as Melicertes, son of Athamas and Ino* 4.542, 13.919.
Palamédes *son of Nauplius (king of Euboea)* exposes Ulysses' feigned madness 13.38–9; subject of Ulysses' revenge 13.56–60; himself convicted on a trumped-up charge of treason 13.308–12.
Pálatine *a hill in Rome, site of Augustus' palace* 1.176; 14.334, 622, 822; 15.561.
Páles *god of shepherds, his festival was traditionally held to have been the day on which Rome was founded (21 April)* 14.774.
Palinúrus *Aeneas' helmsman* 14.88.
Pallánteum *Evander's city in Latium* 14.456.
Pállas *see* **Minerva.**
Palléne *a peninsula in Macedonia* 15.356.
Pan *half-goat god of flocks, woods and shepherds often depicted making music with a reed pipe* in love with Syrinx 1.699–712; defeated in a music competition with Apollo 11.147–63, 171; his cave 14.516; (in plural) a name for other half-goat semi-gods 14.638.
Panchaéa *a distant island to the east of Arabia, famed for its spices* 10.306–9, 478.
Pandíon *king of Athens, father of Procne and Philomela* gives Procne

in marriage 6.427–510; dies of grief 6.675–6; his city's fate 14.429.
Pándrosos *daughter of Cecrops, sister of Herse and Aglauros* entrusted with the box containing Erichthonius 2.558–9; her bedchamber 2.739.
Pánopeus at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.312.
Páphos *daughter of Pygmalion; also a city on Cyprus named after her, from which the island also is sometimes known* 10.291, 297–8, 530.
Paraetónium *a port on the north coast of Africa* 9.773.
Páris *son of Priam and Hecuba, brother of Hector, his abduction of Helen brought about the Trojan War* his tomb 7.361; absent at the mourning for Aesacus 12.4–5; his part in Achilles' death 12.599–609, 13.501; unmoved by Ulysses' embassy 13.200–203; saved from Menelaüs by Venus 15.806.
Parnássus *a mountain in Phocis near Delphi, sacred to Apollo and the Muses* 1.316–18, 467; 2.221; 5.278, 307; 11.165, 339.
Páros (adj. Parian) *an island in the Cyclades* 3.419, 7.465, 8.221.
Partháön *king of Calydon, father of Oeneus, grandfather of Deïanira* his family ruined by Diana 8.542, 9.12.
Parthénius *a mountain in Africa* 9.188.
Parthénope (adj. Parthenopéan) *an old name for* **Naples**.
Pasíphaë *daughter of the Sun, wife of Minos, mother of Phaedra* her adultery with a bull 8.132–7, 9.736–41; gives birth to the Minotaur 8.156–7; mother of Phaedra 15.500.
Pátara *a city in Lycia* 1.516.
Patróclus *great friend of Achilles, a descendant of Actor* saves the Greek fleet 13.273–4.
peacock *Juno's bird* 1.723, 2.532–3.
Pégasus *a winged horse* springs from the spilled blood of Medusa 4.785–6, 5.256–9, 6.119–20.
Pélagon at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.360.
Pélates *a Lapith* kills Amycus 12.254–7.
Péleus *king of Thessaly, husband of Thetis, son of Aeacus, brother of Telamon, father of Achilles* witness to Minos' visit to Aegina (2) 7.477; prepares to aid Athens 7.669; at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.309, 380; his conquest of Thetis 11.217–66; at Ceÿx's court 11.290; his herds attacked by a monster wolf 11.346–406; his blood-guilt purged 11.407–9; married to Thetis 12.193–5; at the battle between the Lapiths and centaurs 12.363–78, 388, 440; his exile 13.145; uncle of Ajax 13.151; possible recipient of Achilles' arms 13.155; succeeded by Achilles 15.856.
Pélias *king of Thessaly, half-brother of Aeson, he sent Jason on the*

quest for the Golden Fleece killed by his daughters at Medea's urging 7.298–349.

Pélion (adj. Pelian) *a mountain range in Thessaly* 1.155; 7.224, 352; 12.74, 513; source of the ashwood from which Achilles' spear was made 13.108.

Pélla *a city in Macedonia* 5.302.

Péloponnese *the part of mainland Greece south of the Isthmus* 2.679.

Pélops *son of Tantalus, brother of Niobe* dismembered by his father after his birth, but reassembled by the gods, replacing his missing shoulder with ivory 6.404–11; Troezen his country 8.623.

Pelórus *a promontory in the north-east of Sicily* 5.350, 13.726–7, 15.705.

Penéüs *a river in Thessaly; its god, father of Daphne and Cyrene* 1.481–8; rescues Daphne by turning her into a tree 1.544–7, 569–74; 2.243; 7.230; 12.209.

Penélope *wife of Ulysses* delays Ulysses' arrival at Troy 13.301; Hecuba as her prize 13.511.

Péntheus *king of Thebes, son of Agave* rejects Bacchus 3.513–731; killed by his mother, Agave, in a bacchic frenzy 3.713–31; punished by Bacchus 4.22–3; his death 4.429.

Peparéthos *an island to the north of Euboea* 7.470.

Pérdix *son of Daedalus' sister* his inventive nature the object of Daedalus' jealousy 8.237–59; changed into a partridge 8.252–5.

Pérgamum *see* **Troy**.

Periclýmenus *son of Neleus, brother of Nestor* killed by Hercules 12.555–72; changes himself into an eagle 12.560–61.

Periméle loved by Acheloüs 8.591–610; changed into an island by Neptune 8.609–10.

Périphas (1) *a king of Attica, husband of Phene* changed into an eagle 7.400.

Périphas (2) *a Lapith* at the battle with the centaurs 12.449.

Periphétes *son of Vulcan, he killed those who passed along the road at Epidaurus* 7.436–7.

Perrhaébia (adj. Perrhaebían) *a region in Thessaly* 12.173.

Pérseus *son of Jupiter and Danaë, husband of Andromeda* confrontation with Atlas 4.610–62; rescues Andromeda and wins her hand 4.663–763; tells of the killing of Medusa 4.764–803; the riot at his wedding-feast 5.1–249.

Pérsia *a land in Asia Minor* 1.62.

Petraéus *a centaur* killed by Pirithoüs 12.327–31.

Peucétia (adj. Peucetian) *a district in Apulia* 14.514.

Phaédimus *son of Niobe* his death 6.239–49.

Phaédra *wife of Theseus, daughter of Minos and Pasiphaë, stepmother of Hippolytus* attempts to seduce Hippolytus, is rejected 15.500–504.

Phaeócomes *a centaur* at the battle with the Lapiths 12.429–41.

Phaéstos *a town on Crete* 9.717.

Pháëthon *son of the Sun (confused here with Apollo) and Clymene* seeks confirmation of the Sun as his father and drives his chariot 1.751–79, 2.19–329; killed by Jupiter 2.311–13; the Sun's distress at his loss 4.246.

Phaëthúsa *one of the Heliades* changed into a poplar 2.346–8.

Phántasos *son of Sleep* 11.641–5.

Pháros *an island near Alexandria in Egypt* 9.773, 15.287.

Phársalus *a town in Thessaly* 15.823.

Phásis *a river flowing into the eastern end of the Black Sea, where the Colchians lived* 7.6.

Phégeus *a king in Arcadia* his sword 9.412.

Phéne *wife of Periphas* changed into a bird 7.399–400.

Phéneos *a place in Arcadia* 15.332–3.

Phéres *king of Pherae (in Thessaly), father of Admetus* at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.310.

Philámmon *son of Apollo and Chione* famed for his musical abilities 11.316–17.

Philémon *husband of Baucis* with his wife entertains Jupiter and Mercury 8.621–724; changed into a tree 8.714–20.

Philíppi *a town in Macedonia* 15.824.

Philoctétes *a Greek hero, friend of Hercules, he inherited his unerring bow and arrows* lights Hercules' funeral pyre 9.231–3; marooned on Lemnos 13.45–56; his arrows needed to sack Troy 13.313–34; given Hercules' arrows 13.401.

Philoméla *daughter of Pandion, sister of Procne* abducted and raped by Tereus 6.441–670; changed into a bird 6.667–9.

Phíneus (1) *brother of Cepheus, betrothed to Andromeda before Perseus' arrival* causes a riot 5.8–235; changed into stone by Perseus using the head of Medusa 5.231–5.

Phíneus (2) *a king in Thrace, who though blind had powers of prophecy* his old age 7.2–3.

Phlégethon *a river in the underworld* 5.544, 15.532.

Phlegraéa *the volcanic region near Vesuvius, site of the battle between the gods and the giants* 10.151.

Phobétor *son of Sleep* 11.639–40.

Phócis *a country in the north of Greece between Boeotia and Aetolia* 1.313, 2.570, 5.276, 11.348.

Phócus *son of Aeacus and Psamathe, half-brother of Peleus* 7.477; welcomes Cephalus 7.668–90; asks about Cephalus' spear 7.794–8; murdered by Peleus 11.267–9.
Phoébe *see* **Diana.**
Phoébus *see* **Apollo.**
Phoenícia (adj. Phoenician) *a country on the Syrian coast, whose chief towns were Tyre and Sidon* 3.46.
Phoénix *companion of Achilles, son of Amyntor* at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.307.
phoénix *a mythical bird* 15.392–407.
Phórbas *a Lapith* kills Aphidas 12.319–26.
Phórcys, daughters of (1) *see* **Gorgons.**
Phórcys, daughters of (2) [also known as **Graiae**] *two sisters, guardians of the Gorgons* 4.774.
Phrýgia (adj. Phrygian) *a country in Asia Minor, often used to refer indirectly to Troy and its people* 6.147, 177, 400; 8.162, 620–23, 719; 10.155; 11.16; 12.70; 13.429, 580; 14.79, 547; 15.444.
Phthía *a city in Thessaly* 13.156.
Phýleus at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.308.
Phýlius *lover of Cycnus (2)* 7.373–7.
Pícus *king of Latium, son of Saturn (a king of Latium)* loves Canens, rejects Circe 14.320–98; changed into a woodpecker by Circe 14.387–96.
Piérus, daughters of [also known as **Pierides**] *named after the Muses by their father* challenge the Muses to a song contest 5.302–32; losers in their contest with the Muses 5.664–78, 6.1–2; changed into magpies 5.671–4.
Píndus *a mountain in Thessaly* 1.570, 2.225, 7.225, 11.554.
Piréne *a spring at Corinth* 2.240, 7.391–2.
Piríthoüs *a Lapith, son of Ixion* at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.304, 403–4; at Acheloüs' banquet 8.567, 612–16; his marriage to Hippodamia 12.210–29; at the battle with the centaurs 12.332.
Pítane *a city on the coast of Aetolia* 7.357.
Pithecúsae [also known as **Apetown**] *an island off the bay of Naples* 14.89–100.
Píttheus *king of Troezen, son of Pelops, father of Aethra (mother of Theseus)* his city 6.419; 15.296, 506; Lelex sent to his land 8.622.
Pleíad *one of the seven daughters of Atlas and Pleione (known together as the Pleiads or Pleiades); a constellation* 1.670, 3.595, 6.174; depicted on Achilles' shield 13.293.
Pleúron *a town in Aetolia* 7.382.

Plexíppus *son of Thestius, brother of Althaea* at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.304; killed by Meleäger 8.432–40.

Plúto [also known as **Dis**] *king of Hades, husband of Proserpina, son of Saturn, brother of Jupiter and Neptune* affected by the scorching from Phaëthon's chariot 2.261; his realm 4.432–46, 510–11; in love with Proserpina 5.356–571; invoked by Medea 7.249; implored by Orpheus 10.15, 46–7; his irritation at Hippolytus' resurrection 15.535.

Póllux *son of Leda and Jupiter, twin brother of Castor* at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.301–2, 372–7.

Polydéctes *king of Seriphos* changed into stone by Perseus using the head of Medusa 5.242–9.

Polydórus *youngest son of Priam* his death 13.432–8; mourned by Hecuba 13.529–43; his fate 13.629.

Polyméstor *king of Thrace* entrusted with Polydorus, kills him 13.431–9; treacherously slays Polydorus 13.530; killed by Hecuba 13.550–66.

Polyphémus *a cyclops* loves Galatea 13.744–869; kills Acis 13.870–83; his treatment of Ulysses' men, described by Achaemenides 14.168–215.

Polýxena *daughter of Priam and Hecuba* her death 13.448–80; mourned by Hecuba 13.494–532.

Pomóna *a wood-nymph* wooed by Vertumnus 14.623–97; wooed by Vertumnus, gives in 14.761–71.

Pompeíus *see* **Sextus Pompeius**.

Póntus *a region in Asia Minor, on the south coast of the Black Sea* 15.755.

Príam *king of Troy, son of Laömedon* mourns Aesacus 11.757–8, 12.1–2; comfort in Achilles' death 12.607–8; moved to return Helen 13.201; murdered 13.404; his children killed 13.482; his death as a release 13.520–23; uncle of Memnon 13.596; model of a wretched man 14.474.

Priápus *obscene god of horticulture and viticulture* chases Lotis 9.347; wooes Pomona in vain 14.640.

Próca *a king of Alba* 14.622, 772.

Próchyte *an island off the coast of Campania* 14.89.

Prócne *daughter of Pandion, sister of Philomela* married to Tereus 6.428–37; mourns her sister's putative death 6.563–70; learns Philomela is alive, avenges her rape on Tereus 6.571–670; changed into a bird 6.667–9.

Prócris *daughter of Erechtheus, wife of Cephalus* her marriage to Cephalus 6.680–81; the course of her marriage ending in her accidental death at the hands of her husband 7.695–862.

Procrústes *a famous robber on the banks of the river Cephisus* killed by Theseus 7.438.
Proétus (1) *twin brother of Aesacus* changed into stone by Perseus using the head of Medusa 5.238–41.
Proétus (2), **daughters of** cured of their mad frenzy by Melampus 15.326.
Prométheus *son of Iapetus (a titan), brother of Epimetheus, father of Deucalion* moulded man out of clay 1.82–3, 363–4.
Propoétides *young women from Amathus* shunned 10.220–22; deny Venus' divinity 10.238–43; changed into granite 10.241–3.
Prosérpina *goddess of spring, queen of Hades, wife of Pluto, daughter of Ceres* affected by the scorching of Phaëthon's chariot 2.261; targeted by Venus 5.376–7; abducted by Pluto 5.392–425; searched for by Ceres 5.438–509; Jupiter sanctions her return for half of the year 5.509–71; depicted in Arachne's weaving 6.114; implored by Orpheus 10.15, 46–7; changes the nymph Menthe into the mint plant 10.728–9; the golden bough in her forest 14.114.
Próteus *a sea-god* 2.9, 8.731–7, 11.221; advises Peleus 11.249–56, 13.919.
Psámathe *a Nereïd, mother of Phocus* sends a wolf to attack Peleus' cattle 11.381; entreated by Peleus and Thetis 11.398–400; turns her wolf into marble 11.404.
Pygmálion *a Cypriot sculptor* falls in love with the statue he creates 10.244–95.
Pygmies *a mythical tribe of dwarves* 6.90.
Pylos (adj. Pylian) *a city on the south coast of the Peloponnese* 2.684, 6.419, 8.313, 12.551, 15.837.
Pyramus *a Babylonian youth* in love with Thisbe 4.55–166; kills himself, believing Thisbe dead; his blood dyes the mulberry fruit red-black 4.119–27.
Pyréneus *king of Thrace* attempts to imprison the Muses 5.274–93; falls to his death after trying to follow the Muses as they escape 5.291–3.
Pyrrha *daughter of Epimetheus, wife of Deucalion* 1.319–415; throws stones which are changed into the new human race 1.401–10.
Pyrrhus *see* **Neoptolemus.**
Pythágoras his philosophy and teaching imparted to Numa 15.60–478.
Pythian Games *a festival celebrated every four years near Delphi* established by Apollo after killing the Python 1.445–50.
Python *a great snake* killed by Apollo near Delphi 1.438–47, 459–60.

Quirínus *the name given to the deified Romulus* 14.828–51, 15.862–3.

raven informs Apollo of Coronis' unfaithfulness, against the warning of the crow 2.534–632; changed from white to black 2.632.
Rémulus *a king of Alba* 14.616–19.
Rhadamánthus *son of Jupiter and Europa* old and exhausted 9.436–7, 440.
Rhégium *a town in Bruttium on the straits of Sicily* 14.5, 47.
Rhésus *a king of Thrace and ally of Troy* killed by Ulysses in a night-time raid 13.98, 249–52.
Rhexénor *one of Diomedes' companions* changed into a bird 14.505.
Rhodes (adj. Rhodian) *an island to the south-west of the coast of Asia Minor, in the Aegean Sea* 7.365, 12.573.
Rhódope *a mountain range in Thrace; its goddess, sister of Haemus* 2.222; changed into a mountain for calling herself Juno 6.86, 589; 10.77.
Rhoétum *a promontory to the north of Troy* 11.197.
Rhoétus *a centaur* at the battle with the Lapiths 12.271–301.
Romans 15.483, 600, 682, 693–6, 756.
Rome *a city in Latium* 1.201; 14.775–849; 15.430–31, 596, 637, 668, 736, 744, 801, 828.
Rométhium *a place in southern Italy* 15.704.
Rómulus *son of Mars and Ilia (Rhea Silvia)* the Romans his people 14.606; regains Numitor's kingdom, founds Rome, war against the Sabines 14.773–806; carried off to become a god by Mars, receives the name Quirinus 14.806–28; his successor 15.2; his spear changed into a tree 15.560–64.
Rumour *personified* 9.137–9; described 12.43–63.
Rutúlians *a people of Latium* clash with Aeneas over Lavinia 14.451–5, 528–9.

Sába *a place in south-western Arabia, proverbial for its riches* 10.480.
Sábines *a people of central Italy* 14.775–832, 15.5.
Sálamis *a city on Cyprus* 14.759.
Sállentines *a people in Calabria* 15.50.
Sálmacis *a spring in Caria; its nymph* pursues Hermaphroditus 4.285–388, 15.319.
Sáme *an island in the Ionian Sea* 13.711.
Sámos (adj. Samian) *an island off the coast of Asia Minor, sacred to Juno* 8.220; original home of Pythagoras 15.60.
Sárdis *the capital city of Lydia* 11.138, 152.
Sáturn *an ancient Italian god, identified with the Greek Cronos, husband and brother of Ops, father of Jupiter, Juno, Neptune and Pluto*

deposed 1.113; depicted in Arachne's weaving 6.126; sleeps with Ops 9.498; father of Picus 14.320; succeeded by his son 15.858.
sátyrs *mythical creatures resembling apes but with the feet of a goat and the tail of a horse* 1.692, 4.26, 6.384, 14.637.
Schoéneus *king of Boeotia, father of Atalanta (2)* 10.660.
Scíron *a notorious brigand on the road from Megara to Athens, who tossed his victims over the cliff edge on to rocks below* his bones changed into rocks 7.443–7.
Scylacéum *a place on the south coast of Italy* 15.702.
Scýlla (1) *a dangerous rock, opposite Charybdis, on the Italian side of the straits of Sicily; originally the daughter of Crataeis* 7.64; comforts Galatea 13.732–49; loved by Glaucus 13.900–966, 14.18–75; girdled with baying dogs through Circe's magic 14.58–67; changed into a rocky headland 14.73–5.
Scýlla (2) *daughter of Nisus of Megara* love for Minos 8.17–151; changed into a bird 8.150.
Scýros *an island north-east of Euboea* 13.156, 174.
Scýthia *a country to the north of the Black and Caspian Seas* 1.65; 2.224; 5.650; 7.407; 8.788, 797; 10.589; 15.286, 359–60.
Sémele [also known as **Thyone**] *daughter of Cadmus, mother of Bacchus* her love affair with Jupiter 3.261–313.
Semíramis *founder and queen of Babylon, daughter of Dercetis, widow of Ninus (king of Nineveh)* changed into a dove 4.47–58; her descendant slain 5.85.
Senate *the supreme governmental assembly of republican Rome* 15.590, 641, 800–802, 844.
Sériphos *an island in the Aegean Sea* 5.243, 251; 7.464.
Séxtus Pompeíus *son of Pompey the Great (a famous Roman general)* 15.825.
Síbyl *the prophetess at the temple of Apollo at Cumae* guides Aeneas as he visits Anchises in Hades 14.104–55; her shrine 15.712.
Sicily *the island off the 'toe' of Italy* 5.361, 412, 464–99; 7.65; 8.282; 13.724–7, 770; 14.7; 15.279, 706, 825.
Sídon (adj. Sidonian) *a town in Phoenicia* 2.840, 3.129, 4.571, 10.267, 14.78.
Sigéüm *a promontory near Troy* 11.197, 12.71, 13.4.
Silénus *the drunken tutor of Bacchus* foster-father to Bacchus 4.26–8; rescued by Midas and restored to Bacchus 11.90–100; among Pomona's wooers 14.639.
Silver Age 1.114–25.
Sílvius *king of Alba, son of Ascanius* 14.609.

Sínis *a robber on the Isthmus* tears his victims apart 7.440–42.
Sinuéssa *a town in Campania* 15.715.
Síphnos *an island in the Cyclades* 7.465.
Sípylus (1) *a mountain in Lydia* 6.149.
Sípylus (2) *son of Niobe* his death 6.230–38.
Sirens *sea-nymphs living off the south coast of Italy, daughters of Acheloüs* changed into birds, though with maidens' faces and voices 5.552–63; passed by Aeneas 14.87.
Síris *a town and river in Lucania (in southern Italy)* 15.51.
Sísyphus *son of Aeolus (2), brother of Athamas, a famous trickster* his punishment in Hades 4.460, 465–9; stops at Orpheus' music 10.44; as an alleged ancestor of Ulysses 13.26, 31.
Sleep [also known as Latin **Somnus**] *personified as a god* told by Iris of Juno's desire that Alcyone should know about Ceÿx's demise 11.586–649.
Sómnus *see* **Sleep**.
Spain 15.14.
Spárta (adj. Spartan, Laconian) *a city in the south of the Peloponnese* 6.414; 10.169, 217–19; 15.51, 426.
Sperchéüs *a river in Thessaly; its god* 1.579, 2.250, 5.87, 7.230.
Stábiae *a town on the bay of Naples* 15.710.
Stýmphalus (adj. Stymphálian) *a district in Arcadia* infested by birds, which Hercules disposed of as one of his labours 5.585, 9.187.
Styx (adj. **Stýgian**) *a river in Hades, surrounded by marshes, by which the gods swear binding oaths* 1.139, 189, 737; 2.45–6, 101; 3.272, 290, 504, 695; 4.434–8; 5.116, 504; 6.662; 10.13, 73, 313, 697; 11.500; 12.322; 13.465; 14.155, 591; 15.154, 791.
Sun [also known as **Hyperion, Titan**] *son of Hyperion, brother of the Moon, father of Phaëthon; Ovid frequently identifies him with Phoebus Apollo, although Apollo in this guise has a rather different character from his more usual self* non-existent before creation 1.10; father of Phaëthon 1.751–79; lends Phaëthon his chariot 2.1–166, 305; his horses 2.182, 208; grief and anger at Phaëthon's fate 2.329–32, 381–400; gleaming 3.151, 4.348; informs Vulcan about Mars' affair with Venus 4.169–74, 14.27–8; in love with Leucothoë (1) 4.190–270; at sunset 6.486–7; 11.256–7; 15.30, 417–18, 642; as father of Aeëtes and thus grandfather of Medea 7.96, 207; Rhodes dear to him 7.365; at dawn 7.804, 15.187–94; compared with Polyphemus 13.853–4; father of Circe 14.9, 34, 375–6; his city (Heliopolis) in Egypt and its temple 15.406–7.
Surréntum *a town on the south side of the bay of Naples* 15.710.
Sýbaris *a town and river in southern Italy* 15.51, 315.

Symaéthus *a river in eastern Sicily; its god, father of Acis' mother* 13.751, 886.
Symplégades *('clashers') two rocky islands near the entrance to the Black Sea, which moved to trap any ship that attempted to sail between them* 15.337.
Sýrinx *a beautiful Arcadian naiad* loved by Pan 1.689–712; changed into reeds from which Pan's pipe is formed 1.706.
Sýros *an island in the Cyclades* 7.464.

Taénarus *the southernmost promontory of Laconia* 10.13.
Táges *grandson of Jupiter, prophet who taught the Etruscans the arts of divination* formed from a clod of earth 15.555–9.
Tántalus (1) *son of Jupiter, father of Pelops and Niobe* his punishment in Hades 4.458–9; favoured by the gods 6.173–4; in Hades 10.41–2.
Tántalus (2) *son of Niobe* killed by Apollo's arrow 6.239–49.
Taréntum *a town in the 'heel' of Italy (modern Taranto)* 15.51.
Tarpeía *a Roman woman* betrays Rome to the Sabines 14.777–8; the Capitol known by her name 15.866.
Tártarus *see* **Hades.**
Tartéssus *a Phoenician colony in Spain* 14.416.
Tátius *a Sabine leader* 14.776–805.
Taúrians (adj. Tauric) *a people in what is now the Crimea* their district sacred to Diana 14.331, 15.489.
Teirésias *a Theban man* changed into a woman and then back into a man; condemned to blindness by Juno but given powers of prophecy by Jupiter 3.323–38; foretells Narcissus' fate 3.339–46; foretells Pentheus' fate 3.511–27.
Télamon *son of Aeacus, brother of Peleus* greets Minos 7.476; wakes his father 7.647; chooses men for the army 7.669; at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.309, 378–9; wins Hesione's hand in marriage 11.216–17; father of Ajax (1) 12.624; 13.22, 346; his deeds recounted 13.23–5; uncle of Achilles 13.152.
Telchínes *craftsmen on Rhodes, endowed with magical powers* 7.365–7.
Teléboäs *a centaur* wounds Nestor at the battle with the Lapiths 12.442–3.
Télemus *prophet, son of Eurymus* warns Polyphemus of his fate 13.770–75.
Télephus *king of Mysia, son of Hercules* wounded and healed by Achilles at Troy 12.112, 13.171–3.
Telethúsa *wife of Lygdus* gives birth to Iphis (1) 9.673–713; anxiety over the impending marriage of Iphis (1) 9.766–93.

Témese *a town in Bruttium (in southern Italy) famed for its mines* 15.707.

Tempe *a valley of the river Peneüs* 1.568–9, 7.222.

Ténedos *an island in the Aegean near Troy* 1.516, 12.110–11, 13.174.

Ténos *an island in the Cyclades* 7.469.

Téreus *king of Thrace* marries Procne, subsequently rapes her sister Philomela 6.424–570; subjected to revenge at the hands of Philomela and Procne 6.614–74; changed into a hoopoe 6.671–4.

Téthys *a sea-goddess, wife of Ocean, mother of Clymene* receives the Sun's chariot at sunset 2.68–9, 156–7; visited by Juno 2.509–31; 9.499; changes Aesacus into a bird 11.784–6; purifies Glaucus 13.950–65.

Teúcer (1) *a Cretan who became an early king of Troy* 13.705.

Teúcer (2) *son of Telamon and Hesione, cousin of Achilles, founder of Salamis on Cyprus* possible recipient of Achilles' arms 13.157–8; ancestor of Anaxarete 14.699.

Thébae *a city in the Troad* 12.110, 13.174.

Thebes *a city in Boeotia* 3.131, 549–61; 4.417; women changed into stones or gulls 4.543–62; 5.254; 6.148–313, 413; 7.764; women present at Alcmena's labour 9.304, 403; 13.682–700; 15.427, 429.

Thémis *goddess of justice, daughter of Uranus (Heaven) and Gaia (Earth), associated with oracles* 1.321–2, 367–81; 4.643; 9.403–19.

Theóphane *daughter of Bisaltes, raped by Neptune in the form of a ram, gave birth to the ram with the Golden Fleece* 6.118.

Thermódon *a river in Pontus, home of the Amazons* 2.249, 9.189.

Thersítes *a loud-mouthed Greek at Troy* 13.232–3.

Théseus *son of Aegeus and Aethra, he spent his childhood with his mother in Troezen and, when grown up, set off for Athens, overcoming a number of challenges on the way* at the court of Aegeus 7.404–52; defeats the Minotaur 8.172–6; called on to help at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.262–71; aims his spear at the boar 8.405–10; at Acheloüs' banquet 8.547–66, 726–7, 881; 9.1–2, 55; at the wedding-banquet of Pirithoüs 12.227–37; at the battle between the Lapiths and centaurs 12.342–60; father of Hippolytus 15.497; succeeds his father 15.856.

Théssaly (adj. Thessálian) [also known as **Haemonia**] *a country in the north of Greece* 1.568; 2.543, 599; 5.306; 7.159, 222, 264, 314; 8.347, 751, 813; 11.230, 409, 652; 12.173, 190, 213, 354.

Théstius *father of Althaea, Toxeus and Plexippus* 8.304, 473.

Thétis *a sea-nymph, wife of Peleus, daughter of Nereus and Doris, mother of Achilles* her conquest by Peleus 11.218–64; supports

Peleus' plea to Psamathe 11.400; mother of Achilles 12.86; tries to save Achilles from his fate 13.162; her ambition for Achilles 13.288.
Thísbe *a young Babylonian girl* in love with Pyramus 4.56–166; kills herself in grief at Pyramus' death 4.162–3.
Thóäs *a Greek at Troy, son of Andraemon (2)* 13.357.
Thrace (adj. Thracian) *a country in the north-east of Macedonia* 2.257; 5.277; 6.86, 425–35, 459–60, 590, 661, 683; 9.641–2; 10.11, 83–5; 11.1, 69, 85; 13.430–39, 565–72, 629.
Thyéstes *son of Pelops, brother of Atreus* 15.462.
Tíber *the river flowing through Rome* 2.259; 14.328, 426–7, 448; 15.431, 625, 728–43.
Tiberínus *a king of Alba, his name given to the Tiber* 14.614.
Tíryns *a city in Argolis, associated with Hercules* 7.410, 9.104, 12.564.
Tisíphone *one of the Furies* 4.474–511.
Títan *usually referring to the* **Sun**, *who was the son of the Titan, Hyperion.*
Títaness *see* **Circe.**
Títans *the children of Uranus (Heaven) and Gaia (Earth)* defeated by Jupiter 10.150–51.
Tithónus *husband of Aurora* granted eternal life but not eternal youth 9.421.
Títyos *son of Jupiter, punished in Hades for insulting Latona* 4.457–8, 10.43.
Tlepólemus *leader of the Rhodians, son of Hercules* asks Nestor about his father 12.537–41, 573–7.
Tmólus *a mountain in Lydia; its god* 2.217; 6.15; 11.86–7; judges the contest between Apollo and Pan 11.156–72.
Tóxeus *son of Thestius, uncle of Meleäger* at the Calydonian boar hunt 8.304; insults Atalanta (1), killed by Meleäger 8.432–46.
Tráchas *a town in Latium* 15.718–19.
Tráchis *a city in Thessaly* 11.269–77, 282, 408, 502, 627, 651.
Triptólemus *the inventor of agriculture, son of Celeus (king of Eleusis)* scatters Ceres' seed across Europe and Asia, attacked by Lyncus in Scythia 5.646–61; changed into a lynx by Ceres 5.660.
Tríton *sea-god, son of Neptune* 1.331–40, 2.8, 13.919.
Tritónis *a lake in Africa near where Minerva supposedly first appeared* 15.358.
Tróad *the area around Troy* 7.364.
Troézen *a town in Argolis* 6.418; 8.568; 15.296, 506.
Trójans [also known as **Dardanians**] *the people of Troy* 14.72, 86, 160, 220, 455, 566–74; 15.452.
Troy (adj. Trojan) [also known as **Pergamum, Ilium,** its citizens also

as **Dardanians**] *a city in Asia Minor, besieged for ten years and finally captured by the Greeks* 8.366; 9.233, 268; 10.160; 11.26, 38, 64–72, 196–215, 758, 767; 12.113–14, 135, 445, 584–614; 13.23–381, 408–505, 520, 623; 14.444, 458, 466, 562; 15.160, 421–5, 436, 442–3, 770.

Túrnus *a king of the Rutulians, engaged to Lavinia* 14.451–7, 526–39; his death 14.566–74, 15.773.

Tuscan Sea *see* **Etruscan Sea.**

Túscany *a region in Italy* 14.615, 15.554.

Týndareus *a Spartan king, husband of Leda, sometimes presented as the real father of Castor and Pollux* 8.302.

Týphon *a hundred-headed giant* cast down by Jupiter 3.302–3; 5.321–4, 348–55.

Tyre (adj. Tyrian) *a city in Phoenicia* 2.845; 3.35, 259, 539; 5.51, 391; 6.61, 223; 9.341; 10.211, 267–8; 11.166; 15.287.

Ulýsses [the Homeric **Odysseus**] *king of Ithaca, husband of Penelope, son of Laërtes, father of Telemachus, a Greek hero in the Trojan War renowned for his wily nature; on his return voyage he drifted lost at sea for ten years* seeks Achilles' shield after his death 12.624–5; wins Achilles' shield in the contest with Ajax, many of his deeds in the war recounted 13.7–387; rescues Philoctetes, his role in the fall of Troy 13.398–425; does not scorn Hecuba 13.486; his kingdom of Ithaca 13.712; fated to blind Polyphemus 13.773; his companions caught by Scylla 14.71; Macareus his companion 14.159; fleeing the Cyclops 14.180; cursed by Polyphemus 14.192–7; his wanderings, comes to Circe's island 14.222–312; his ship hated by the sea-nymphs (formerly Trojan vessels) 14.564.

Uránia *one of the Muses* welcomes Minerva 5.260–68.

Venília *wife of Janus, mother of Canens* 14.333–4.

Vénulus *a Rutulian* seeks Diomedes' (2) aid for Turnus 14.457–61, 513.

Vénus *goddess of love, wife of Vulcan, mother of Cupid* personification of sexual love 3.295, 321–3; 6.460; 13.758; affair with Mars 4.172–86, 14.27; revenge on the Sun 4.190; mother of Hermaphroditus 4.288; intercedes for Ino and her child with Neptune 4.531–42; worshipped as a fish 5.331; sends Cupid to engender love between Pluto and Proserpina 5.364–79; Procris compared with her 7.803; argues for rejuvenation of Anchises 9.424–5; invoked by Byblis 9.482; at the marriage of Iphis (1) 9.796; anger at the Cerastae 10.229–37; anger at the Propoetides 10.238–43; her festival on

Cyprus 10.270; grants Pygmalion's desire 10.277–9; praised by Pygmalion 10.292–5; love affair with Adonis 10.524–58; called on by Hippomenes 10.640–51; helps Hippomenes but is angry at his ingratitude 10.673–90; grief at Adonis' death 10.707–37; mother of Aeneas 13.623; doves sacred to her 13.674, 15.386; wounded by Diomedes (2) 14.477–9, 15.769; taunted by Acmon 14.487–95; watches Aeneas triumphant 14.572–3; obtains deification for Aeneas 14.584–607; rejected by Pomona 14.634; her shrine at Salamis 14.761; seeks deification for Julius Caesar and brings it about 15.761–849.

Vertúmnus *an Italian god* attempts to seduce Pomona 14.642–97; wins Pomona 14.761–71.

Vésta *goddess of the hearth, daughter of Saturn* her sacred fire 15.730; Julius Caesar her priest 15.777–8, 865.

Vírbius *Hippolytus' new name* 15.544.

Vúlcan *god of fire who made the gods' weapons, husband of Venus, son of Jupiter and Juno* his work displayed on the front of the Sun's palace 2.5; maker of the Sun's chariot 2.106; father of Erichthonius 2.757; ensnares Mars in bed with Venus 4.173–85; his flames purify Hercules' corpse 9.263; argues for rejuvenation of Erichthonius 9.423–4; turns Achilles' corpse into ashes 12.614–15; forges Achilles' arms 13.290; Lemnos sacred to him 13.314.

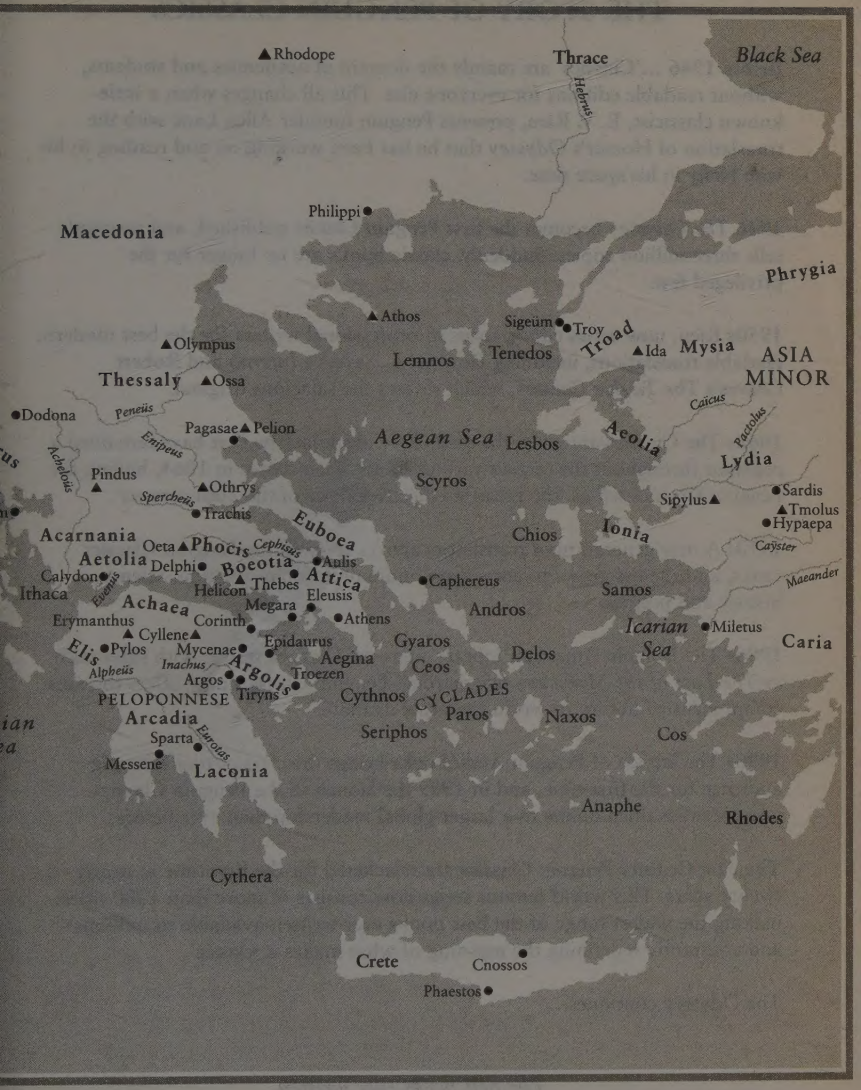
Xánthus (1) *a river near Troy* 2.244.

Xánthus (2) *a river and city in the south of Lycia* 9.647.

Youth *see* **Hebe.**

Zéphyrus *a warm west wind* 1.63, 108; 13.726; 15.699.

Ovid's Mediterranean World


Rhodope
Thrace
Black Sea
Hebrus
Macedonia
Philippi
Phrygia
Athos
Sigeum
Troy
Troad
Olympus
Lemnos
Tenedos
Ida
Mysia
ASIA MINOR
Thessaly
Ossa
Caicus
Dodona
Peneus
Pagasae
Pelion
Aegean Sea
Lesbos
Aeolia
Pactolus
Lydia
Epirus
Achelous
Pindus
Othrys
Scyros
Sipylus
Sardis
Tmolus
Hypaepa
Spercheius
Trachis
Euboea
Chios
Ionia
Acarnania
Oeta
Phocis
Cephisus
Aetolia
Delphi
Boeotia
Aulis
Cayster
Calydon
Attica
Caphereus
Maeander
Ithaca
Evenus
Helicon
Thebes
Eleusis
Samos
Achaea
Megara
Andros
Erymanthus
Corinth
Athens
Icarian Sea
Miletus
Caria
Cyllene
Epidaurus
Gyaros
Pylos
Mycenae
Aegina
Delos
Elis
Alpheüs
Inachus
Argolis
Ceos
Argos
Troezen
Tiryns
PELOPONNESE
Cythnos
CYCLADES
Paros
Naxos
Arcadia
Seriphos
Cos
Sparta
Eurotas
Messene
Laconia
Anaphe
Rhodes
Cythera
Crete
Cnossos
Phaestos

THE STORY OF PENGUIN CLASSICS

Before 1946 ...'Classics' are mainly the domain of academics and students, without readable editions for everyone else. This all changes when a little-known classicist, E. V. Rieu, presents Penguin founder Allen Lane with the translation of Homer's *Odyssey* that he has been working on and reading to his wife Nelly in his spare time.

1946 *The Odyssey* becomes the first Penguin Classic published, and promptly sells three million copies. Suddenly, classic books are no longer for the privileged few.

1950s Rieu, now series editor, turns to professional writers for the best modern, readable translations, including Dorothy L. Sayers's *Inferno* and Robert Graves's *The Twelve Caesars*, which revives the salacious original.

1960s The Classics are given the distinctive black jackets that have remained a constant throughout the series's various looks. Rieu retires in 1964, hailing the Penguin Classics list as 'the greatest educative force of the 20th century'.

1970s A new generation of translators arrives to swell the Penguin Classics ranks, and the list grows to encompass more philosophy, religion, science, history and politics.

1980s The Penguin American Library joins the Classics stable, with titles such as *The Last of the Mohicans* safeguarded. Penguin Classics now offers the most comprehensive library of world literature available.

1990s The launch of Penguin Audiobooks brings the classics to a listening audience for the first time, and in 1999 the launch of the Penguin Classics website takes them online to a larger global readership than ever before.

The 21st Century Penguin Classics are rejacketed for the first time in nearly twenty years. This world famous series now consists of more than 1300 titles, making the widest range of the best books ever written available to millions – and constantly redefining the meaning of what makes a 'classic'.

The Odyssey continues ...

The best books ever written

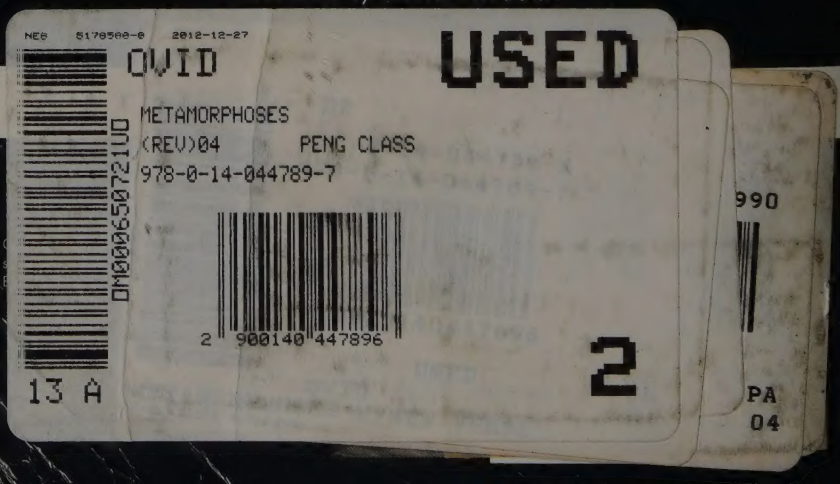
PENGUIN CLASSICS

SINCE 1946

Find out more at www.penguinclassics.com

'Her soft white bosom was ringed in a layer of bark, her hair was turned into foliage, her arms into branches'

Ovid's sensuous and witty poem brings together a dazzling array of mythological tales, ingeniously linked by the idea of transformation – often as a result of love or lust – where men and women find themselves magically changed into new and sometimes extraordinary beings. Beginning with the creation of the world and ending with the deification of Augustus, Ovid interweaves many of the best-known myths and legends of ancient Greece and Rome, including Daedalus and Icarus, Pyramus and Thisbe, Pygmalion, Perseus and Andromeda, and the fall of Troy. Erudite but light-hearted, dramatic and yet playful, the *Metamorphoses* has influenced writers and artists throughout the centuries from Shakespeare and Titian to Picasso and Ted Hughes.

This lively, accessible new translation by David Raeburn is in hexameter verse, which brilliantly captures the energy and spontaneity of the original. The edition contains an introduction discussing the life and work of Ovid as well as a preface to each book, explanatory notes and an index of people, gods and places.

A NEW VERSE TRANSLATION
Translated by DAVID RAEBURN